

'Every Day Matters'
An Attendance Strategy

Children's Services

September 2012

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1. The National Context

Attendance has been steadily improving in the last few years, but there were still 57 million days of school missed in 2009/2010. The evidence shows that children with poor attendance are unlikely to succeed academically and they are more likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school.

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

Despite the improvements in attendance there remain a small number of children who are persistently absent (PA). Until recently PA applied to pupils who missed more than 20 per cent of school in any term. From September 2011, this threshold was lowered to include those who missed more than 15 per cent. This change will ensure that pupils are identified as having problems at an earlier stage, but this still tends to put the emphasis on secondary school 'truants' where there are the highest numbers of PA pupils.

In his speech to Durand Academy on 1 September 2011, the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, talked about the 'missing million' children who are absent from school for more than three weeks a year. He referred to the 'educational underclass' of children who often did not achieve academically because they simply had not spent enough time at school.

Following this, the Secretary of State asked Charlie Taylor (the Government's Expert Adviser on Behaviour) to review the issue of 'truancy' and to make a series of recommendations to improve the attendance of these children. His report, published in April 2012 made the following 10 recommendations:

Recommendation 1: That the language of Government focuses more on improving attendance and there is less use of the word 'truancy'.

Recommendation 2: That Ministers focus on improving the attendance of vulnerable pupils in primary schools.

Recommendation 3: That the Government changes the focus, when talking about attendance, away from unauthorised and authorised absence, towards making overall absence and persistent absence the headline figures to discuss publicly.

Recommendation 4: That apart from for Year 11, national statistics on attendance are produced for the whole year, not just up until half term in the summer.

Recommendation 5: That consideration is given to whether there need to be changes in what data is collected and how study leave is recorded in Year 11 and to the implications of raising the participation age.

Recommendation 6: That changes are made to the pupil registration regulations to strengthen the rules on term time holidays. While head teachers should continue to have discretion, holidays in term time should be the exception rather than the rule.

Recommendation 7: That data on attendance in reception is published along with local and national averages and this is considered when Ofsted inspects.

Recommendation 8: That Ofsted sets specific, timed targets for improving attendance in schools where it is low.

Recommendation 9: That all primary schools analyse their data on attendance and quickly pick up on children who are developing a pattern of absence.

Recommendation 10: That primary schools focus on supporting parents in nursery and reception who are failing to get their children to school.

2. The Lincolnshire Context

Our vision for children's services is:

'That every child in every part of the county should achieve their potential'

and this is under-pinned by five principles:

1. Early Intervention and Prevention

- Strong universal services, providing early action and intensive support to vulnerable children and young people.

2. Safeguarding and Best Start in Life

- Ensuring children are safe in every environment.
- Encouraging community responsibility for safeguarding.

3. Aspiration and Well Being

- Ensuring all those working with children champion the importance of aspiration.
- Develop self-esteem, self-belief and resilience in all children, young people and their families.

4. Learning and Achievement

- All children being the best that they can be.
- Closing the gap between vulnerable groups and children living in disadvantaged communities.

5. Best Use of Resources

- Integrating delivery with a focus on outcomes, life chances and opportunities.
- Effective use of resources to provide better services locally.
- Empower communities, creating opportunities for them to engage.

Good school attendance is equally supported by our five principles.

3. The Legal Framework for Pupil Attendance

The law in respect of pupil attendance is summarised below -

- “All children of compulsory school age (5 – 16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise. If a child is registered at a school, parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.
- LAs have a duty under Section 437 of The Education Act 1996 to serve a Notice or School Attendance Order on a parent where appropriate in order to enforce parents’ responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable education.”

This duty is normally exercised through the Educational Welfare Service.

Legal Responsibilities of the School

The law requires that schools take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning and once during the afternoon session.

The register must show whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site, or absent (distinguished as either authorised or unauthorised).

Parents may not authorise absence, only the schools can do this. Inappropriate use of authorisation of absence can be damaging to a child’s education.

Schools are required to inform the LA (Education Welfare Service) if a pupil fails to attend regularly, or has been absent for a continuous period of 10 days, and the absence is treated as unauthorised.

Legal Powers for the Enforcement of Attendance

LAs have legal powers to enforce attendance as follows:

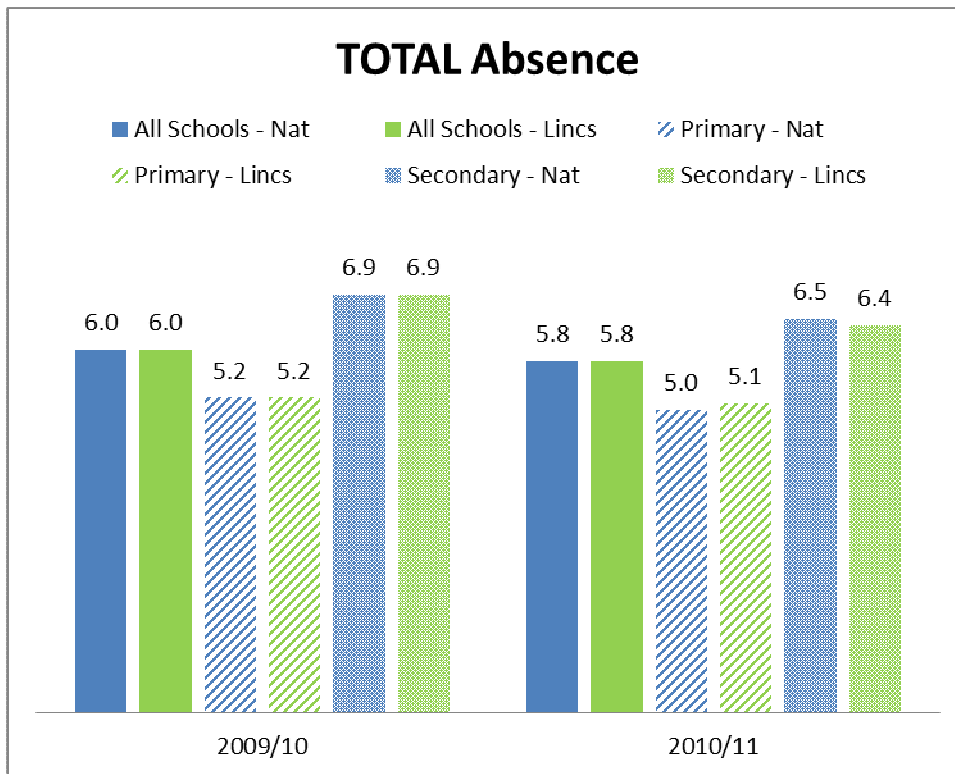
- School Attendance Orders (Sections 437-443, Education Act 1996). Where a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, a LA may issue a School Attendance Order.

These Orders are not intended for pupils who attend irregularly. Such Orders are served usually in cases where a pupil has not been enrolled in a school, and is not receiving a suitable education otherwise, and in the opinion of the authority it is expedient that the child should attend school.

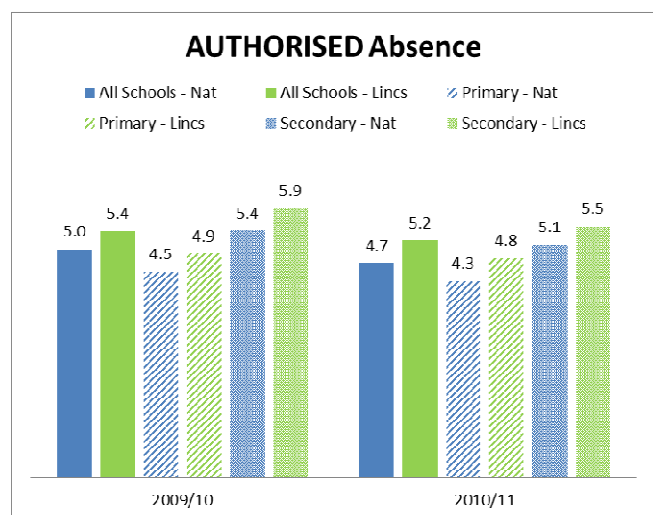
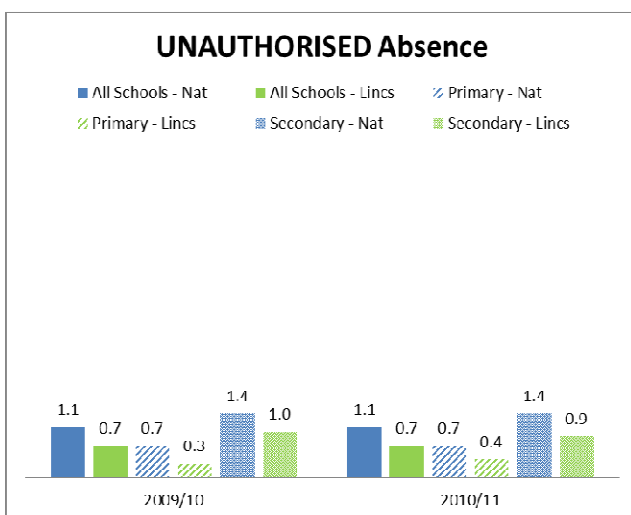
- Prosecution for Irregular Attendance. (Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1),) If a pupil of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly, the parent can be prosecuted. On conviction, the offence carries a fine up to a maximum of £1000.
- Prosecution for Irregular Attendance. (Education Act 1996 Section 444(1) A) The aggravated offence will apply to parents who know that their child is failing to attend school, and take no reasonable action to secure the child's attendance. On conviction this offence carries a maximum fine of £2,500 and/or up to three months imprisonment.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 amended section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to provide for the issue of a penalty notice to parents who fail to ensure that their child who is of compulsory school age and registered at a school attends there regularly. These notices can be issued as an alternative to prosecution, the penalty being £50 if paid within twenty eight days and £100 if paid within forty two days. From September 1st 2012 these penalties rise to £60 and £120 respectively for offences completed wholly after that date. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in the parent being prosecuted in accordance with Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.
- Parenting Orders. Magistrates may impose a Parenting Order if this would help prevent further pupil absence. The Order would require parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions for up to three months. It may also specify other requirements, for example, for the parent to escort the child to and from school for up to twelve months.
- Education Supervision Orders (Section 37, Children Act 1989 / Section 447 Education Act 1996) - a Local Authority may apply to the Family Court for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) as an alternative to or in addition to prosecution of the parents. An ESO places a child under the supervision of the LA to ensure the child receives a suitable education.

4. Our Current Position

Children in Lincolnshire attend school as often as their peers Nationally. Like the national picture less absence is seen in our primary schools when compared to our secondary schools, although absence in both is decreasing and the gap between them is shrinking.



Total absence is made up of both authorised and unauthorised absence, which unlike the chart above shows a very different pattern compared to that nationally. It can be seen that in Lincolnshire the proportion of the absence that is unauthorised is much less in both the primary and the secondary phases of education, which means therefore that much of the absence is authorised by the school. However, absence is absence.



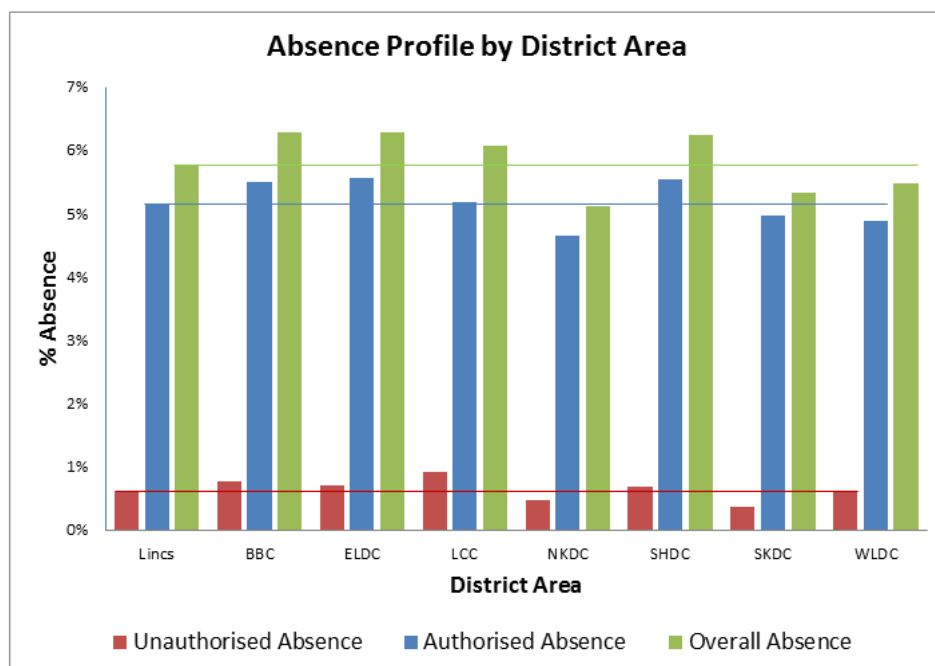
There are many reasons why children are absent from school with illness, medical/dental appointments, agreed family holiday and 'other' as the top four. Table 1 below shows the percentage distribution of absences for Lincolnshire compared with that Nationally.

**TABLE 1: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS
ABSENCE BY REASON**
Autumn 2010 and Spring 2011 Terms

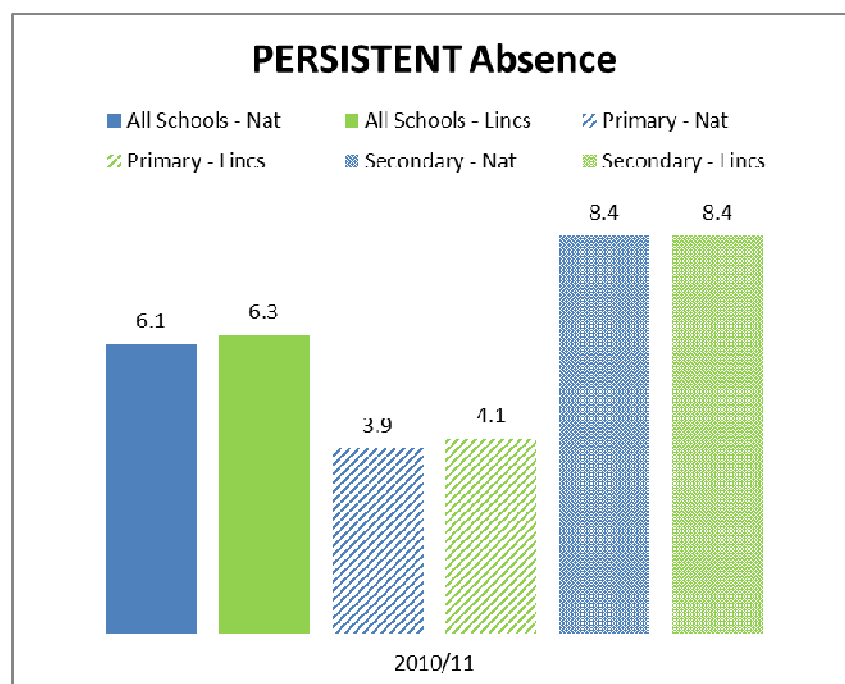
	Primary		Secondary		Primary and Secondary	
	Lincs	Nat	Lincs	Nat	Lincs	Nat
DISTRIBUTION OF REASONS FOR ABSENCE						
Percentage of absent sessions due to:						
Illness (NOT medical or dental)	64.6%	64.2%	61.5%	58.1%	62.9%	61.0%
Medical/dental appointments	5.3%	4.9%	7.6%	6.3%	6.6%	5.7%
Religious observance	0.2%	2.3%	0.1%	1.4%	0.1%	1.8%
Study Leave	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	0.4%	0.7%	0.2%
Traveller absence	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Agreed family holiday	14.4%	8.9%	5.5%	3.2%	9.5%	5.9%
Agreed extended family holiday	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Excluded, no alternate provision	0.5%	0.3%	1.7%	2.3%	1.2%	1.3%
Other authorised circumstances	7.5%	5.3%	8.6%	6.7%	8.1%	6.0%
Total Authorised Absence	92.9%	86.5%	86.4%	78.4%	89.3%	82.3%
Percentage of absent sessions due to:						
Family holiday not agreed	0.6%	3.0%	1.0%	2.1%	0.8%	2.5%
Arrived late	0.8%	1.2%	0.7%	1.2%	0.8%	1.2%
Other unauthorised	2.9%	7.3%	6.7%	15.1%	5.0%	11.4%
No reason yet	2.7%	2.0%	5.3%	3.2%	4.1%	2.6%
Total Unauthorised Absence	7.1%	13.5%	13.6%	21.6%	10.7%	17.7%
Total Overall Absence	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Of immediate note is the difference between the distributions of agreed and not agreed family holiday within Lincolnshire compared to that nationally. Lincolnshire authorises more family holiday than nationally, although the total absence due to family holidays is broadly the same.

Attendance is not uniform across the County.



If a child misses 15% or more of a school term then they are classified as persistently absent. In Lincolnshire there is a greater incidence of persistent absence (PA) in our primary schools than that seen nationally.



Using the Autumn 2011 census data¹, there are 2164 primary pupils recorded as persistently absent and 3098 pupils in secondary schools. All secondary schools and all but 15 primary schools have some PA pupils. However, 158 primary schools (57%) and 22 secondary schools (40%) have PA figures higher than that nationally: their distribution is not equal about the County.

**TABLE 2: PERSISTENT ABSENCE
PA BY PHASE AND BY DISTRICT AREA**
Autumn 2011

	Primary			Secondary		
	No of Schools with PA above Nat	% of Schools with PA above Nat	No of PA Pupils	No of Schools with PA above Nat	% of Schools with PA above Nat	No of PA Pupils
BBC	12	71%	210	2	40%	216
ELDC	43	73%	457	7	50%	452
LCC	16	73%	269	4	67%	366
NKDC	16	35%	144	0	0%	0
SHDC	26	74%	263	3	50%	327
SKDC	24	47%	211	4	40%	268
WLDC	21	47%	183	2	29%	186
Lincs	158	57%	1737	22	40%	1815

The remaining 427 primary and 1286 secondary pupils are those that are PA but not attending schools that have above national rates of PA.

Parents who do not ensure that their children attend school are subject to legal sanctions; initially with the issuing of a fixed-penalty notice (FPN) which if not paid can progress to

¹ At the time of the compilation of the report the national PA figures were not yet published for the Autumn term, so in its place the previous year's average PA figure for Sept 2010 – May 2011 was used. This is known to be a 'harsh' comparison as PA is shown to be at its highest in the autumn term and the lowest in the summer term. This measure was used to ensure that a 'better than national' outcome would be achieved.

consideration of prosecution. In Lincolnshire there are very few FPN's issued and consequently a very small number result in parental prosecution.

In 2010/11 Lincolnshire issued 65 FPN, 21 of which were paid within 28 days. Of those that were not paid 15 were followed through for prosecution. The remainder were withdrawn or no further action taken. This profile is consistent with other 'shire' authorities. Those authorities serving urban areas typically tend to be those that use FPN more frequently but in the main prosecution is under-used.

Currently, the number of FPN in 2011/12 is higher than last year and there is a year-on-year increase in the number issued.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011-Jun 12
Primary	18	20	12
Secondary	18	45	56

This rise is notable in schools that have converted to Academy schools.

5. Where We Go From Here

Lincolnshire's attendance has mirrored the national picture for many years but that is not to say that the national picture is an acceptable one. The purpose of this strategy is set out what can be done next to bring about a step-change in the overall improvement in the attendance of pupils in Lincolnshire's state-funded schools. There is no one single answer to bringing about this change which is why a multi-service, multi-partnership approach is required.

Our 7 key areas of focus are:

- **Ethos and attitudes (E&A)**

Some parents treat younger children's attendance differently to when they are older, an easier 'yes' when young (possibly as much as 3% difference), yet this could instil the wrong message and perhaps be a root cause for later persistent absence. There are also low expectations and aspirations in some families based on their own experiences of school or their outcomes.

A communication campaign will be devised to raise the profile of good school attendance focussing on young children and those families that live in areas of greatest need: this will be part of a wider communication to all families. A review of attendance certificates will be undertaken to look at better rewards for those that have outstanding levels of attendance at school.

- **Early years intervention (EYI)**

Many schools have confirmed what the data suggests in that good attendance has to be addressed as early as possible to ensure that expectations are high from the start of their school career.

Education Welfare Services have been remodelled to take into account the greatest need by both locality and school phase with the emphasis on targeting those schools with the largest persistent absence; in the first year of the strategy 85% of the intensive support will be with primary age children. Many young children attend non-statutory pre-school education and the Birth to Five service will target a specific campaign at raising the awareness of good attendance at an early age and encourage wider monitoring of absence. Wider services within Children's Services will incorporate service specific actions in their annual delivery plan to cover both statutory and non-statutory planning meetings with children and families so that school attendance can be incorporated into a child's plan

- **Corrective intervention (CI)**

57% of primary schools have a PA level greater than that nationally whereas in secondary it is 40%, this means that in autumn 2011 there were 2164 primary and 3098 children with less than 85% attendance. Currently, 15 primaries and 1 secondary school show significantly low levels of attendance.

Education Welfare Services will annually review the Autumn term's attendance data and identify those schools that have significant levels of persistent absence. For maintained schools an intensive corrective intervention package will be designed and implemented, for Academy schools assurance will be sought from the Principal about their plans for restorative actions.

The Families Working Together project is integrated into this strategy and Education Welfare Services will provide delivery support to the project until March 2015.

- **Family holiday (FH)**

14% of all absence in primary school is due to agreed family holiday (nationally 8.9%), secondary it is 5.5% (nationally 3.2%) – what is most notable is when you look at the unauthorised family holiday (i.e. not agreed) primary 0.6% (nationally 3.0%), secondary 1.0% (nationally 2.1%) – in summary family holiday in Lincolnshire primary schools is nearly three times that in secondary and both are more likely to authorise family holiday than not.

Headteachers were briefed on the issue of authorising family holidays in the summer term; this will be backed up by a communication to Headteachers and governors at the start of the Autumn term. The agreement of family holiday should be because exceptional circumstances have been proven as opposed to a perceived entitlement. Headteachers will be supported by a wide-spread poster campaign.

- **Geographical differences (GD)**

Not all areas of the county are equal. Total attendance in North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) area is 94.9% as opposed to East Lindsay District Council (ELDC) area which is 93.7%. The percentage of schools in these areas that have less than 85% attendance is NKDC = 9%, ELDC = 28% - over three times the difference.

Education Welfare Services will be deployed for one third of their time in the ELDC area for the first year of the strategy, this will be reviewed annually.

- **Legal Services and timescales (LST)**

Insufficient use is made of FPN and parental prosecution. Many schools feel that the legal process of fixed-penalty notices and then legal prosecution is time-consuming and too long.

An internal review of the legal processes and procedures will be undertaken and results communication to schools in the form of a training session.

- **Falling through the gaps (FTtG)**

For those children that are off role (out of school) it is not clear if we are able to ensure there is no avoidable delay in seeking to return them to a suitable education provision as often several services will be involved.

The Local Authority will review and amend its own policies and processes to ensure that there is no avoidable delay in returning children to a suitable education provision following any removal from a school's roll.

Each area is supported by the actions detailed in the plan below:

6. Action Plan

ID	Action	Timescale	Owner
1 E&A	Raise awareness of strategy with Head teachers prior to its launch in September	Jun 2012	Head of Service: School Administration
2 EYI, CI	Update action plan using Children's Services Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting in June to gather collective actions/commitments from LCC services	Jun 2012	Children's SMT
3 CI	Update action plan following Education Welfare Service Team Meeting	Jul 2012	Education Welfare Service Manager
4 All	Confirm support and agreement from Children's Executive Councillor and Directorate Management Team (DMT)	Aug 2012	Director of Children's Services
5 E&A, FH	Communication team to create recognisable logo to support the strategy	Aug 2012	Strategic Communications
6 E&A, FH	Create communication strategy to reach parents and other public sector organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors • Parents • Children and Young People • Governors • Headteachers • Managers • Employees 	Aug 2012	Strategic Communications
6 EYI, CI	'Reducing Absence Project' to be devised and incorporated into Locality Service Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard questions about school attendance on TAC/ CiN/ CP, LAC plans – responses RAG rated and appropriate challenge applied • Team manager and other team meetings – consistent message • Promoting key messages about good attendance in public buildings e.g. children's centres 	Oct 2012	Head of Service: Early Intervention (North & South)
7 EYI	Specific campaign aimed at parents of 0-5 year olds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters in children's centres • Parenting courses to mention school attendance 	Oct 2012	Head of Service: Early Intervention (North & South)
8 EYI	Encourage monitoring of absence in non-statutory provision e.g. nursery classes	Sep-Jul 2013	Birth to 5 service
9	Children with Disabilities (CwD) team to explore potential to challenge and support attendance	Sep-Dec	Head of Service:

E&A	of CwD in mainstream and special schools	2012	Children with Disabilities
10 E&A	Review information given to foster carers and residential homes about school attendance.	Oct 2012	Head of Service: Regulated Services
11 CI, GD, EYI	Review delivery model of school intervention to support attendance strategy	Jun 2012	Education Welfare Service Manager
12 FTtG	Undertake a workshop to review those policies that deal with children/young people out of school e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children Missing Education (CME) • Electively Home Educated Children (EHE) • Mid-year admissions (MYA) • Hard to Place Pupils Protocol (HPP) • Managed Moves Protocol (MM) 	Sep-Oct 2012	Inclusion & Attendance Service Manager Pupil Services Manager Education out of School Manager
13 E&A, EYI, FH	Internal communication to LCC employees about the strategy and the Council's support of schools no longer authorising family holidays unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated	Aug 2012	Strategic Communications
14 E&A, EYI, FH	Poster campaign throughout public facing buildings on the promotion of good attendance at school through LCC and other public sector organisations	Sep 2012	Strategic Communications
15 All	Attendance Strategy launched	5 th Sep 2012	Head of Service: School Administration
16 E&A, EYI, FH	School communities agree on strategy of saying 'No' to authorising family holidays unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated	Sep 2012	Headteachers of Lincolnshire Schools
17 LST	Review legal pathway to ensure there are no unnecessary delay points in the process	Sep 2012	Inclusion & Attendance Team Manager
18 EYI, CI, FH, LST,	Produce school handbook/toolkit on securing good attendance and include a section in the 'starting school' handbook to promote good attendance. Produce an insert for schools to include in their school planners for children.	Sep-Oct 2012	Education Welfare Service Manager

FTTG			
19 All	Provide training for schools and Governors on legal processes for securing good attendance	Oct-Dec 2012	Education Welfare Service Manager
20 FTtG, CI	Update children missing education (CME) policy and process	Sep 2012	Inclusion & Attendance Service Manager
21 CI, FTtG	Review TAC threshold for attendance issues	Oct 2012	Head of Service: Early Intervention (North & South)
22 CI, FTtG	Looked After Children attendance monitored by LACES	Jul 2012	Looked After Children Education Services Manager
23 EYI, CI, FH,GD	Review input into the schools causing concern process	Sep 2012	Inclusion & Attendance Team Manager
24 All	Review data sources available to show impact of strategy on attendance and persistent absence	Aug-Sep 2012	Inclusion & Attendance Service Manager
25 E&A	Review the current process for issuing 100% attendance certificates for pupils to include greater rewards for longer 100% attendance periods	Oct 2012	Inclusion & Attendance Service Manager
26 E&A, CI	To work with the Families Working Together project to coordinate delivery to achieve early intervention to complex cases	Jul-Mar 2015	Head of Service: Youth Offending & Education Welfare Service Manager

7. Measuring Impact

There are 3 areas that will be tracked to demonstrate achievement and impact:

1. The status of each of the actions on the action plan will be reported at the end of each term to the Directorate Management Team (DMT).
2. Autumn term attendance data will be used each April to determine those schools that require corrective intervention for the following academic year. Using the new intervention model the number of pupils required to cease being PA so that the school attains a level of PA commensurate with that of its phase nationally will be identified as the target for success. In the academic year 2012-13, 15 primary and 1 secondary school have been identified as requiring intensive support.

Progress will be monitored termly for 3 terms and reported to the DMT.

3. The third area to demonstrate impact is the effect of non-authorisation of family holiday as a reason for absence.

Part 1 - The target is to at least maintain the size of the gap between Lincolnshire and that nationally for the total amount of absence. It is expected that the levels of unauthorised and authorised absence will shift to a position which is closer to that nationally even though this is a non-desirable change. The table below shows the comparative figures for the autumn 2010 and spring 2011 terms combined:

	Primary		Secondary	
	Lincs	Nat	Linc	Nat
Absence	5.1%	5.0%	6.4%	6.5%
Unauthorised	0.4%	0.7%	0.9%	1.4%
Authorised	4.8%	4.3%	5.5%	5.1%

Part 2 - The percentage distribution of absence type is expected to make the following changes:

- The percentage of absence due to illness to remain the same
- The percentage of absence due to agreed family holiday to reduce to a figure commensurate with that nationally
- The percentage of absence due to agreed extended family holiday to be at least maintained
- The percentage of absence due to unauthorised family holiday to increase to a figure commensurate with that nationally

The table below shows the comparative figures for the autumn 2010 and spring 2011 terms combined:

	Primary		Secondary	
	Lincs	Nat	Linc	Nat
Illness (I)	64.6%	64.2%	61.5%	58.1%
Agreed Family Holiday (H)	14.4%	8.9%	5.5%	3.2%
Agreed Extended Family Holiday (F)	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Unauthorised family Holiday (G)	0.6%	3.0%	1.0%	2.1%

A report to show the progress made in Lincolnshire schools will be produced in March and June. Comparative national data is not published until the October following the autumn and spring terms in question. Upon publication a summary report will be produced.

8. Bibliography

Taylor Review on Improving School Attendance

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The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contents/made>

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1725/contents/made>

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/1625/contents/made>

Education Act 1996

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>

Revised Regulations on Education-Related Penalty Notices From September 2012

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00208166/penalty-notices>

Local Authority Duties and Legal Measures to Ensure School Attendance

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a0010003/local-authority-duties-and-legal-measures-to-ensure-school-attendance>