



Improving school attendance

Truancy patrol partnership: w/c Monday 9 May 2016

What we did?

Nottingham City Council joined forces with Community Protection to hold truancy patrols to ensure children are in school.

Truancy 'hotspots' across the city were targeted by the council's Education Welfare Service and Community Protection Officers on Tuesday 10 May. Any children found outside of school were challenged and their details taken for checking later. If truant, the pupils were taken back to school or their home address. Parents could be issued with a fixed penalty notice by the Education Welfare Officers.

Fines of £60 per parent per child are issued through the courts for unauthorised absence. If this is not paid in 21 days, the fine doubles to £120 per parent, per child. If the fine is still unpaid, courts can impose tougher fines (with court costs) of up to £2,500 – and even have the power to issue prison sentences.

The council also encouraged people in the community to report children they see who should be in school by calling a new hotline number: 0115 8761949.

Why we did it?

The council's message is a strong one, but we have to be clear: children who are registered with a school need to be in that school, it's the law. It's not acceptable to be off school in term time, missing school can seriously harm your child's education.

We want all parents to be in no doubt that the City Council will take action when a child is persistently absent without agreement from the school.

This tough stance on absence has so far helped to improve school attendance in Nottingham. Recent figures from the Department for Education show persistence absence



has fallen from 4.6% in 2013/14 to 4.2% in 2014/15. The city has also seen a drop in overall absences and is narrowing the gap on national schools significantly.

The day of action is part of a long-term action plan to improve school performance in Nottingham City through the Education Improvement Board. The City Council is also working with schools and academies to promote and recognise excellent attendance and good behaviour.

Impact of missed school days

Even a pupil with 90% attendance is effectively missing one day of school every two weeks. In the working world, that's almost a month of absence every year. Most importantly, missing 17 days of school has been proved to be the difference between getting one higher grade at GCSE level – and that is crucial for our young people.

The statistical release from the Department for Education for 2014/15 shows:

Persistent absence from school

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nottingham	6.4%	4.6%	4.2%
England	4.6%	3.6%	3.7%
Gap (ppts)	1.8%	1.0%	0.5%

Nottingham's national ranking for persistent absence from school has improved from 141st in 2013/14 to 119th in 2014/15 (out of 152 local authorities).

Overall absence from school

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Nottingham	6.1%	5.1%	4.9%
England	5.2%	4.3%	4.6%
Gap (ppts)	0.8%	0.6%	0.3%

Nottingham's national ranking for overall absence improved from 143 in 2013/14 to 121 in 2014/15 (out of 152 local authorities)

Sourced from official DfE releases: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence#full-year-release>



Results of truancy sweep

Officers began patrols in hotspots across Nottingham around 9.30am and finished at 12.30pm. They patrolled in cars, on foot, in parks, town centres and shopping centres. In those three hours, the officers stopped 45 children over the city, 23 of them were in Bulwell.

There was a mixture of lone children, groups of children and children with their parents. The Education Welfare team will now work with schools and families to investigate each case to see what action needs to be taken.

Media campaign

The media were invited to join officers on a truancy patrol in Bulwell on Tuesday morning. Reporters attended from Radio Nottingham, BBC East Midlands Today, ITV Central, Notts TV and GEM 106.



Media	Monday 9 May	Tuesday 10 May	Wednesday 11 May
Radio Nottingham	<p>Breakfast show</p> <p>Includes interview with Councillor Sam Webster (00:02:00, 01:01:41, 01:18:09, 02:02:30)</p> <p>http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03s7trf#play</p>	<p>Drivetime show</p> <p>Interview with Councillor Sam Webster (01:26:28)</p> <p>http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03s7tj#play</p>	<p>Breakfast show</p> <p>Community Protection Officer Phillip Hurworth denies it is a heavy handed approach (00hr: 02min:56min, 01:04:05, 01:07:23)</p> <p>http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03s7tx7#play</p>
BBC East Midlands Today		<p>Evening news - Education standards in the East Midlands have been under the microscope after a series of inspections by Ofsted. And one thing that never helps school standards is truancy. Today patrols were out in one city to find kids who weren't in schools. Nottingham City Council says the number of children taking unauthorised absences from</p>	

		school is coming down. But it is still above the average for England. Includes interview with Tracey Cross, Education Welfare Manager and Councillor Sam Webster. <i>No link as iPlayer service expires after 24 hours.</i>	
ITV Central		Evening news Interview with Vicki Otley, Education Welfare Officer and Tracey Cross. http://www.itv.com/news/central/update/2016-05-10/report-crackdown-on-schoolchildren-playing-truant/	
Notts TV	Web article http://nottstv.com/truancy-hotspots-targeted-city-council-patrols/	Interview with Tina Stuart, Education Welfare Specialist and Councillor Sam Webster http://nottstv.com/programmes/news/?videoid=4887158279001	
Nottingham Post	Includes quote from Councillor Sam Webster http://www.nottinghampost.com/Crackdown-Nottingham-students-skipping-school/story-29248989-detail/story.html		
GEM 106		Breakfast and drivetime news Children bunking off school will be caught and returned to the classroom as part of a city-wide crackdown. Truancy hotspots across Nottingham will be targeted by special officers who will hit the streets. <i>No listen back service</i>	

Nottingham City Council, Communications and Marketing Team

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