

Council sues parents over truancy

COUNCIL SUCCESSFULLY PROSECUTES TWO CASES RELATING TO POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The City of Edinburgh Council has been successful in prosecuting two separate cases where a parent neglected to ensure their child attends school.

One parent pled guilty in the Justice of the Peace Court Edinburgh to failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Sentencing was deferred until 26 June 2013 to monitor the child's attendance at school. A second, similar case was also heard where the parent entered a not guilty plea. After a trial, the Justice found the accused guilty and a fine of £150 was imposed.

The Council is taking these steps to help improve attendance at school and pupil participation and performance. Once a child's attendance drops below 85 per cent this triggers a formal process to look into what issues are causing this absence.



Convener of
Education – Paul
Godzik

Councillor Paul Godzik, Education, Children and Families Committee Convener said: -“Prosecution is a last resort; before we consider it we will use all available recourses and statutory interventions to try and improve a pupil's attendance.

“However, as has been proved here, despite our best efforts, some parents fail to take adequate measures to improve their

child's attendance at school. These successful prosecutions send out a clear message that those who continuously refuse to work with our staff will answer for their child's poor attendance in court. We will continue do everything possible to help children get the education they deserve."

For those found guilty, the penalties include, a fine of up to £1,000 or imprisonment of up to one month as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

Under this Act local authorities are obliged to address the issue of non-attendance and to support the on-going work of the Area Attendance Advisory Groups and the Attendance Order Review Group.

The current process usually follows similar steps;

- child is absent from school regularly
- referral to Education Welfare Officer who will visit and work with the family, despite this intervention absences continue
- parent asked to appear before Area Attendance Advisory Group
- still no improvement - parent will be summoned to appear before the AORG (Attendance Order Review Group)