

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To: Education Committee	Subject: School Leaving dates for pupils in special schools and units
From: Director of Education	
Date: 24 November 2004	
Ref: JOK/NR	

Purpose of Report

This report seeks the permission of members to formalise the school leaving dates for pupils with Records of Needs in special schools and units, bringing them in to line with the parameters set for the majority school population.

Recommendations

The committee is asked to:

- (i) note the contents of the report
- (ii) approve the proposals contained therein
- (iii) instruct the director of education to implement the changes required thereafter
- (iv) refer to social work committee for information



Members wishing further information please contact:

Michael O'Neill, Director of Education on 01236 812336 or
John O'Keane, Head of Quality and Support Services on 01236 812291

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

School leaving dates for pupils in special schools and units

Report by the Director

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In mainstream school settings, clear leaving dates have been long established to determine when the statutory obligations both to provide and attend schooling should cease.
- 1.2 For pupils whose 16th birthdays fall between 1st March – 30th September in any year the set leaving date is 31st May. For pupils whose 16th birthdays fall between 1st October and 28th February the leaving date is set at the end of the Christmas term.
- 1.3 Although there is no obligation for pupils with Records of Needs to attend school beyond the statutory age of 16 legislation requires that an authority must close a Record of Needs when the young person reaches 18 years of age or ceases to be in receipt of school education, whichever comes first.
- 1.4 Understandably and rightly, the majority of pupils in our special schools and units now stay on beyond the age of 16 right up to, and in some cases beyond, their 18th birthdays until the age of 19 years.
- 1.5 However, a lack of clear stipulation regarding the relationship between reaching the age of 18 and the corresponding school leaving date has had a number of implications:
 - Difficulties in strategic and budgetary planning, with additional costs being incurred beyond those required of the authority in terms of its statutory obligations
 - Confusion over the timescale for long-term plans and transition from school to an appropriate placement beyond that
 - Slippage and confusion in setting clear goals beyond school education due to timescales which can become elongated.
 - An occasional lack of urgency at arriving at appropriate post-school outcomes.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that, in line with the legislation regarding the closing of Records of Needs, school leaving dates be set for pupils who reach their 18th birthdays in special schools and units.
- 2.2 For pupils whose 18th birthdays fall between 1st March – 30th September in any year the set leaving date would be the end of the summer term. For pupils whose 18th birthdays fall between 1st October and 28th February the leaving date would be set at the end of the Christmas term.

- 2.3 Setting these dates would have a number of advantages:
- The provision of clarity for all involved, not least the young person and their carers, regarding the length of their secondary-aged schooling.
 - The requirement of a tighter focus on the part of all agencies involved in better and earlier identifying, and thereafter providing at the right time, the appropriate post-school outcome for the individual young person.
 - As a point of principle, ensuring that the leaving dates for these pupils have the same rigour and the accompanying need for completion of outcomes as are provided for their non-recorded peers.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the contents of the report
- (ii) approve the proposals contained therein
- (iii) instruct the director of education to implement the changes required thereafter
- (iv) refer to social work committee for information