Meeting:	Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum
Date:	25 January 2010
Subject:	**Update on School Attendance Manager Post**
Report of:	**Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children, Families and Learning**
Summary:	**To update the Schools Forum on the current position with regards to schools that have passed the FMSiS.**

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Public/Exempt:	Public
Wards Affected:	All
Function of:	Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To note proposals for future HR support to schools in relation to attendance management.**

Review of Attendance Manager posts 2009 – 10 paper.

1. The role of Attendance Manager for Schools Based Staff was set up with funding from the Schools Specific Contingency fund within Bedfordshire County Council's Schools Forum. These roles were funded for one year with two substantive members of the HR team seconded to these posts until 31st March 2009.

2. The shadow Central Bedfordshire Council's Schools Forum in March 2009 reviewed the position, deciding to continue with one substantive post for a further year funded by the Schools Specific Contingency fund on the proviso that this service be integrated into the general HR buy back to schools for 2010 – 11 if it was demonstrated that the role was successful and added value to schools.

3. The following statistics compare the first quarter of 2008 and 2009 absence levels and costs, leading to a review of the performance and impact of the Attendance Manager role.

Average days of Sickness Comparison : April – Jun 2008/April – Jun 2009

Average Days of Sickness Comparison - April - Jun 2008/April - June 2009
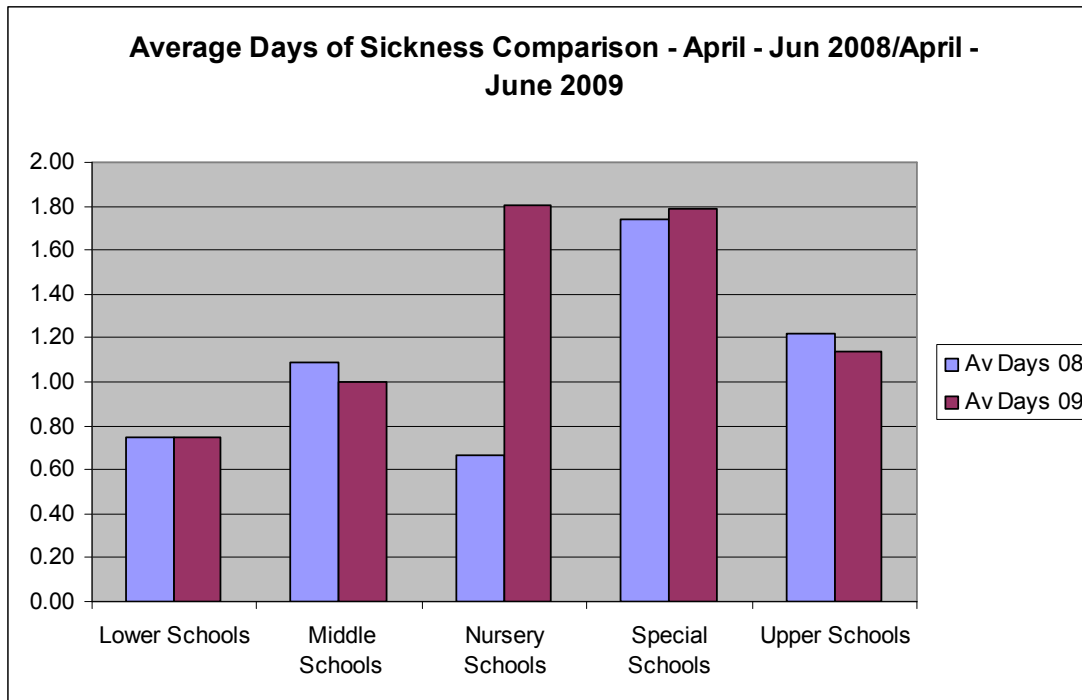
	Av Days 08	Av Days 09
Lower Schools	0.75	0.74
Middle Schools	1.09	1.00
Nursery Schools	0.66	1.80
Special Schools	1.74	1.79
Upper Schools	1.22	1.14
	5.42	6.47

4. The statistics show an overall increase and some of the following may provide some reasons for this increase:

- Increased accuracy in the monthly sickness absence reporting for schools.

- The size of the workforce (average full time equivalent) has increased by 1.5%.

- There were inaccuracies with the historical data recording of absences on the system, for example during school closure periods employees were entered as returned to work however had remained off sick.

- Increased numbers of schools completing their returns regularly.

5. The dramatic increase in nursery schools absence is specifically accountable to 6 members of staff being off on a long term basis.

6.   **Comparisons of absences showing costings on salary basis.**

Absence Costing based on salary - April - Jun 08/April - Jun 09
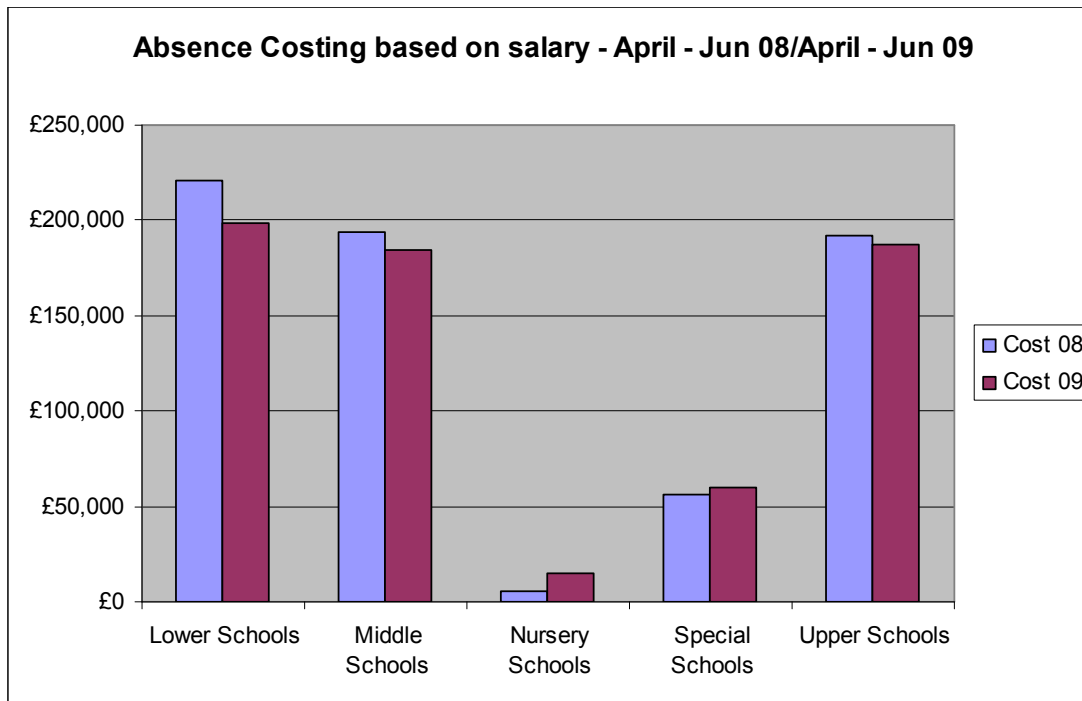
Post	Costing based on Salary April – June	
	08	09
Assistant Headteachers	£15,827	£3,679
Deputy Headteachers	£25,440	£9,079
Headteachers	£25,985	£35,941
Support Staff	£8,706	£2,350
Teachers	£394,621	£364,390
Teaching Assistants	£198,891	£230,756
Grand Total	£669,470	£646,196

The chart shows the salary based costing of sickness absences and indicates that there has been a reduction overall from £669,470 to £646,196. Note these costs do not take into in account when an employee enters a period of half or nil pay.

7. **Number of Cases supported**

The Attendance Manager, in conjunction with a team of other HR professionals, has supported Head Teachers and senior schools staff in managing a variety of absence management cases.

When last reported in March 2009, the team were dealing with 37 live cases and this has now increased to 66 live cases.

Feedback received from Schools in relation to the Attendance Manager Service

As part of a wider HR review, a questionnaire was sent out to all schools with the following comments received in relation to the Attendance Manager service:

"Absence, well tracked and very useful date. Great support from Attendance Manager during negotiations relating to long term absence."

"Excellent advice and support for attendance management. A really good service!"

"Outstanding."

"I have found the new post of Attendance Manager to be highly valuable. The email information about the costs of staff absence adds a focus to the reality of sickness."

"Have had great support from the Attendance Manager."

8. **Summary**

Quantitative data - One of the primary objectives of the Attendance Manager role was to improve the quality of the data available to us for analysis and this work has continued during 2009. The statistics demonstrate the recorded levels are increasing although the total cost of sickness absence has slightly decreased in the comparable time period. .

Qualitative data - it is clear from the feedback from schools that they value the service they have received from the Attendance Manager and the additional information available to them as a direct result of this post. There is clearly an appetite for this support to continue.

Whilst the data evidences the benefits of the focus provided by this role, it is not clear that the stand alone role of attendance manager is the best and only solution for the future.

9. **Plans for integration of Attendance Manager work to HR buy back service**

As per previous agreement by the Schools Forum, the work of the attendance manager is to be incorporated into the buy back service in future.

The stand alone role has been useful to schools for policy and promotion of the attendance management agenda in general. However whilst many schools have reported that they value this service, they have also requested more support staff to contact on a daily basis for initial queries and advice on a wider range of issues than just attendance.

To meet this, the HR team are looking to create an HR officer role to provide a wide variety of HR advice to schools and this will include advice on all employee relations issues including attendance management. As such, work is currently ongoing on costing an additional role to the schools HR team and schools HR buy back. This role will provide a more flexible service to schools boosting the current advisory service, incorporating some of the attendance manager role, with the remaining responsibilities of the role to be distributed through the team appropriately.

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Appendix - None