

# News release

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## Attendance Puts Connor on Cloud Nine

One Sunderland boy was flying high at the weekend as he celebrated his outstanding attendance record.

As one of three special winners, Connor Dixon, nine, and his mum, Eileen took to the skies on Saturday as they explored their home town of Sunderland from the clouds during a unique Every Schoolday Counts helicopter ride.



'Get your attendance off to a flying start' was the message from the Every Schoolday Counts autumn campaign, which was designed to help encourage and motivate young people to maintain good attendance throughout the school year as well as at key periods.

The special campaign saw every child in Sunderland who achieved a full attendance record between 01 September 2008 and 24 October 2008 entered into a free prize draw to win a once in a lifetime helicopter ride.

Connor, who attends Ryhope Junior School, said: "The helicopter trip was amazing, we got to see all of Sunderland including the Stadium of Light, Penshaw Monument and the river!"

Connor's mum, Eileen, added: "This was a wonderful experience for Connor and we are all so proud of him. The helicopter competition was an excellent way to really encourage youngsters like Connor to think about their attendance at school.

"Every Schoolday Counts is a fantastic incentive to all school children as everyone stands a chance regardless of their academic standard as its all about attending school. This is something which has always been important in our house and although Connor used to suffer from problems with his ear he has always worked hard at school, while managing to keep a steady attendance level," Eileen continued.

Every Schoolday Counts is a unique initiative which was developed in Sunderland by the City Council in 2002. The project works to promote excellent attendance and punctuality in all of Sunderland's primary and secondary schools.

Councillor Pat Smith, Cabinet Member for Children's Services within Sunderland City Council, said: "Every Schoolday Counts is an outstanding initiative, a real asset to Sunderland which is definitely helping to improve school attendance across the city by engaging with young people and their families. It is easy to think that the odd missed day won't matter but they all add up and can have a dramatic affect on a child's attainment."

The Every Schoolday Counts project aims to ensure that every child who achieves good or improved attendance is rewarded. This includes using a range of incentives such as Annual Celebration Events, free prize draws as well as credit, merit and distinction certificates to increase and acknowledge good attendance patterns.