



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Education & Skills Corporate Delivery Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Wednesday, 25 January 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor M Durke (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins
T M White

Councillor(s)

L R Jones
R V Smith

Councillor(s)

S Pritchard

Officer(s)

Gareth Borsden
Stephen Holland
Helen Howells
Sarah Hughes
Helen Morgan-Rees
Kate Phillips

Democratic Services Officer
Principal Solicitor
Team Manager for Pupil Support
Team Manager for Education Strategy
Director of Education
Head of Vulnerable Learner Service

Also present

Councillor R V Smith - Cabinet Member for Education & Learning

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J P Curtice, F M Gordon and S Joy

31 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

32 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Education & Skills Corporate Delivery Committee held on 14 December 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

33 Attendance & Inclusion.

Helen Howells provided a powerpoint presentation outlining the background to the development of the action plan for attendance.

Included and outlined within the presentation were the following areas:

- Action plan been developed as attendance levels have been dropping for the last four years, and the aim is to produce a clear and concise plan in association with stakeholders in order that the Education Welfare Service (EWS) can introduce smarter ways of working and improve processes which will hopefully lead to better outcomes for learners in Swansea;
- The action plan is broken down into various different sections and these are outlined below, as well the projected outcomes and the progress made to date;
- First action is to ensure every school has an attendance policy which is reviewed regularly, but reflects the holistic approach to behaviour, attendance, well-being and welfare;
- Aims are that our outcomes will be improved with better consistency across all our settings and we want a coproduced policy with clear expectations in relation to attendance and monitoring for all stakeholders and that should include parents, teachers and local authority staff;
- Draft plan has been compiled and is in its final draft and should be completed by the end of March, with sign off by this committee hopefully in April.
- Response flowchart has been produced and already implemented, but this needs to be fully embedded across schools;
- Letters associated with the process, including those that accompany the fixed penalty notices are in the process of being updated. A task and finish workshop with our EWS has been organised and we're hoping we will have those outcomes and information relating to that shortly;
- Task and finish workshop also arranged for headteachers at the cross phase meeting which is planned for the 9th of February and the discussion planned also includes how best to engage with our learner voice and how to gauge our learner voice which we know is a really important issue, this meeting will also include a discussion about the review of the EWS;
- Parent Carer Forum has also been contacted to support our parents and carer voice, as we want to make sure that all our stakeholders are included within our policies and processes;
- Another action would be to produce a clear and concise guide to the work of the EWS and to embed the recommendations of the 2019-2020 consultation process, the aim/outcome of this would be to achieve stakeholder input to ensure consistency of practice and targeted response from our EWS, and for them to adopt smarter ways of working to suit the current educational climate;
- Increased school attendance and improved outcomes for our learners are all part of the aims of the plan, so our progress to date is that it the inclusion strategy has been finalised which provides the strategic direction for improving attendance going forward;
- The pupil support team has been reviewed and a new post established which will provide a strategic lead on attendance and exclusion going forward. The officer will take up post at the end of February and the hope is that new position will increase capacity within the team and allow for a greater strategic oversight;
- A further action would be to consider the increase of emotional based school avoidance and to ensure that this informs developments to support the emotional health and psychological well-being (EBSA) group. The department

would aim to support schools, to engage with parents and carers on attendance strategies;

- Whole team EBSA training has been organised for the EWS and we are pleased that this is being put in place from May 2023 and that training is going to be carried out by one of our educational psychologists;
- A review of the whole school approach to emotional health and well-being funding and closer engagement with the strategic group to ensure a targeted response to increased attendance and engagement, with specific focus on EBSA;
- Next action point would be to better analyse attendance data and use this proactively to identify need and to set realistic targets going forward, potential outcomes from this action is regular data analysis to inform our practice. The EWS have been asked to work differently to improve and provide intense targeted support to those schools with attendance below 90%;
- Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) have now been reintroduced but further analysis of the effectiveness of them is needed going forward. 147 have been issued to date since September, but the overall effectiveness of the FPNs is currently unsure and the reasons and factors why parents continue to keep their children off school will need further research and investigation;
- Progress to date, we have seen some improvements in attendance during the autumn term, with average attendance for all secondary schools is 2% higher than the previous year, primary schools were also doing really consistently quite well in the first part of the autumn term, until the severe illness that effected primary schools nearer the Christmas period and obviously the information that came from the NHS about keeping children home if parents thought they had scarlet fever, strep or any conditions like that, has hugely impacted on the attendance figures for that period;
- Next action would be to ensure prevention and early intervention strategies linked to other priority areas to ensure our children actually want to attend school, the outcomes we'd like to achieve from this would be to support our families and reintegrate our children who have been electively home educated to return to school;
- We would also like to consider attendance holistically and to ensure effective approaches are in place across the Directorate and the wider Council. We now have an officer who has been appointed to support electively home educated families which did increase post Covid, the post is funded by Welsh Government and the grant is specifically targeted at those who are electively home educated;
- The final action is to better communicate expectations to partners and stakeholders, particularly our governing bodies and for us to develop improved authority wide communications on attendance via our social media channels. We aim to try and engage with our families that potentially haven't been engaged with so far, as we think that via social media networks and channels may be the best way of doing this. So one of our outcomes would be consistency of attendance and expectations of all our stakeholders and improved outcomes for our learners;
- Initial discussions around our revised social media communications have been undertaken and we are looking to finalise any communication strategy within our attendance policy.

Members of the committee asked numerous questions and made comments regarding the information highlighted in the presentation, particularly around support for governing bodies and governors, better engagement of parents, cross departmental working and performance indicators, the Officer, Director and Cabinet Member responded accordingly.

Information on the attendance figures for all schools for the autumn term would be circulated to Members of the committee following the meeting.

34 Work Plan

The Chair spoke further to the circulated draft work plan and outlined that the next two meetings would focus on Strengthened and Effective School Governance.

The meeting ended at 4.34 pm

Chair