



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

Scrutiny Performance Panel – Education

At: Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

On: Thursday, 13 July 2023

Time: 4.00 pm

Convenor: Councillor Lyndon Jones MBE

Membership:

Councillors: A Davis, A M Day, B Hopkins, Y V Jardine, S M Jones, S Joy, S E Keeton, J D McGettrick, F D O'Brien, A J O'Connor

Co-opted Members: Beth Allender and Elizabeth Lee

Agenda

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|--|----------|
| 1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests. www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests | |
| 2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips | |
| 3 Minutes | 1 - 5 |
| 4 Letter/s | 6 - 9 |
| 5 Public Questions Questions can be submitted in writing to scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk up until noon on the working day prior to the meeting. Written questions take precedence. Public may attend and ask questions in person if time allows. Questions must relate to items on the open part of the agenda and will be dealt with in a 10-minute period. | |
| 6 Managing and Improving School Attendance including data Cllr Robert Smith Cabinet Member (Education and Learning and Skills), and Helen Morgan Rees (Director of Education), Kate Phillips (Head of Vulnerable Learners) and Helen Howells (Team Manager Pupil Support) | 10 - 39 |
| 7 Managing and Improving School Exclusions including data Cllr Robert Smith Cabinet Member (Education and Learning and Skills), and Helen Morgan Rees (Director of Education), Kate Phillips (Head of Vulnerable Learners) and Helen Howells (Team Manager Pupil Support) | 40 - 44 |

Next Meeting: Thursday, 14 September 2023 at 4.00 pm

Huw Evans

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Thursday, 6 July 2023
Contact: Scrutiny Officer

Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Education**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Thursday, 15 June 2023 at 4.00 pm

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

B Hopkins
F D O'Brien

Councillor(s)

Y V Jardine
A J O'Connor

Councillor(s)

J D McGettrick
R V Smith

Co-opted Member(s)

Beth Allender

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Robert Smith

Officer(s)

Sarah Hughes
Rhodri Jones
Helen Morgan-Rees
Kate Phillips
Michelle Roberts

Team Manager for Education Strategy
Head of Achievement & Partnership Service
Director of Education
Head of Vulnerable Learner Service
Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): A Davis, A M Day, S M Jones, S Joy and S E Keeton

65 Confirmation of the Convener

Councillor Lyndon Jones was confirmed as convener for the Panel for the municipal year 2023/2024.

66 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Councillor Lyndon Jones declared a personal interest in Item 12.

67 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

None

68 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on the 11 May 2023 were agreed by the Panel.

69 Letter/s

The letter to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning was noted.

70 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

71 Additional Learning Needs Reform Update (watching brief item)

The Panel thanked the Head of Vulnerable Learners for attending and taking them through the update of Additional Learning Needs Reform.

The Panel heard that the ALNET strategy has been reviewed and finalised, with a new strategy drafted that aligns to the regional strategy with outstanding actions being transferred to the new strategy. It now covers the period 2022 to 2027 and has 4 priority areas:

- Schools
- Post 16
- Collaboration; and
- Early years

The Panel also heard about the successes and the challenges being experienced. The Panel noted that despite the Welsh Government's wish to establish a less adversarial system the council has seen an increase in the number of requests for tribunals and that this has placed pressure on services and has highlighted a need for an internal review into processes and procedures to ensure there is appropriate level of resource.

The Panel were pleased to hear that extensive work is underway to moderate, quality assure and support schools to achieve a consistent, equitable offer to all learners. Also, that collaboration with the local health board is strengthening with a productive partnership developing.

The Panel asked about post-16 education and whether we ensure that the organisations that deliver services are fulfilling their roles effectively. The Panel heard yes, we do work with our key delivery partners to ensure they as strong as they can be to deliver what is required and we are doing this in a joined-up manner.

The Panel agreed that ALN reform is an ongoing process and they will continue to keep a watching brief on progress.

72 New Curriculum for Wales Update - Verbal (watching brief item)

The Panel thanked the Head of the Achievement and Partnership Services for the verbal update on progress with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales.

The Cabinet Member said that this was an evolving piece of work and that he was very pleased with how it was progressing.

The Panel heard that there are so many different things to work on, but that it is a positive story that we have to tell here in Swansea. The Panel was told that the Welsh Government do recognise the curriculum design is an ongoing cyclical process of engagement, design, planning, training and evaluation, and this is something that continues with us here in Swansea. Also, that it is an iterative process, with each school's curriculum continuing to evolve to meet the needs of their learners.

The Panel heard about some of the next steps for implementation, including:

- The School Improvement Team will focus on ensuring the effectiveness of school curriculum plans. Supporting schools to ensure they have been able to define how they will measure pupil progress and provide the graduated approach to professional learning so that schools can access support equitably and when they require it.
- Maximise the available funding to support key areas like on numeracy and digital competency framework.
- Secure additional support to deliver the Welsh in education strategic plan.
- Promote and share effective practice through the head teacher meetings.
- Strengthen our focus with our secondary colleagues to make sure that they have the support they require as they move on that journey for the curriculum for Wales.

The Panel asked whether teaching staff were getting enough support and are we taking all staff on the journey with us. They heard that, yes this is the case and what we are seeing on the ground now is distributive leadership across our schools. So, we are not having head teachers and senior leadership team alone driving this work. What we are seeing are teams within the schools taking it forward. When we visit our schools for updates, we are also looking for best practice to share and we are not just hearing from the head teacher. We are hearing from the staff on the ground about how they have worked collaboratively.

The Panel asked about the workload especially when you include the pressures of working and assisting other schools across clusters. They heard that there has been plenty of national discussion, but that we are also looking at this at a local level. We have been working with our schools to look at what that burden is looking like and seeing what we as a local authority can do to support our schools in that area. The sharing aspect is really important and in the strong clusters we see that. What we see with the cluster working is rather than everybody trying to do everything, they are taking what worked in another area, looking at how that will work in their own schools etc.

73 Education Estyn Inspection - Progress with recommendations

The Panel thanked the Team Manager for Education Strategy for outlining progress with the two recommendations made following the Estyn Inspection of Local Government Education Services in Swansea in June 2022. The Panel heard that progress in the following areas has been made:

Recommendation 1 - Review post-16 provision to ensure that it meets the needs of all learners.

- A three-year post-16 strategy is now in operation for Swansea
- A memorandum of understanding for successful transition of all school leavers has been developed
- Meetings with all headteachers has taken place regarding sixth form pupils accessing most suitable provision for them
- An extensive learner voice survey has been carried out
- Opportunities for online/hybrid models of curriculum delivery at post-16 have been explored
- Joint professional learning activities have taken place with Gower College and schools with sixth forms
- Transition funding has been allocated to schools with sixth forms to ensure collaboration
- Seren Academy continues to deliver sessions and opportunities
- A partnership between several South Wales education institutions called Reaching Wider has been developed with the aim of raising aspirations for young people
- Work to support skills needs as part of Swansea Bay City Deal is ongoing with the next step to undertake a mapping of progression routes through a targeted area of health and wellbeing provision offered at pre-16, post-16 and beyond.

Recommendation 2 – Strengthen Welsh-medium provision across all ages and areas of the local authority.

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was approved by Welsh Government and a delivery plan has been developed outlining the key work streams. Progress with the plan is being closely monitored and first annual progress report will be submitted to Welsh Government in July 2023.
- Discussion on key priorities regularly takes place with Partneriaeth Addysg Gymraeg Abertawe.
- Since adoption of the WESP, options have been explored for increasing the equity of the offer Welsh Medium childcare and primary school provision.
- Pilot taking place for primary latecomers continues until the end of this academic year.
- Swansea schools Siarter Iaith journey continues to move forward with a number of schools receiving bronze, silver and gold accreditations.
- Additional information to be added to the councils website around benefits of Welsh-medium education.
- Welsh-medium clusters have been working together with the council to identify potential models for Welsh-medium specialist provision in the future.
- Staffing through the medium of Welsh was raised as a significant challenge in all key priority areas, including early years, teaching staff, support staff and staff with ALN expertise.

74 Key issues affecting education 2023/24 - Verbal

The Panel thanked the Director of Education for her presentation outlining some of the key issues affecting education in Swansea 2023/2024. She covered 8 key issue areas including:

1. Removing barriers to learning
2. Curriculum implementation
3. An inclusive education
4. Resource management
5. School leadership
6. Performance of schools
7. Community based learning
8. Cymraeg belongs to all.

The Panel agreed that aspiration is vital for children and young people and were also pleased to hear that schools were building upon their relationships with employers to help young people understand and be inspired by the world of work.

The Panels work plan has been designed to reflect these key issues where possible.

75 Draft Work Programme for 2023/24 for discussion

The Panel agreed the work plan for the municipal year 2023/2024.

The meeting ended at 5.35 pm

Chair

Agenda Item 4



To:
Councillor Robert Smith
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Michelle Roberts
Gofynnwch am:
Scrutiny Office 01792 637256
Line:
Llinell
Uniongyrchol:
e-Mail scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
e-Bost:
Date 26 June 2023
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning following the meeting of the Panel on 15 June 2023, where the Panel looked at Additional Learning Needs Reform, Curriculum for Wales, progress with Estyn recommendations and the education scrutiny work plan for 2023/24.

Dear Cllr Smith,

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 15 June 2023

We would like to thank you and Helen Morgan Rees (Director of Education) for attending the meeting and providing information for the Panel. We are writing to you to reflect on what we learnt from the discussion and to share the views of the Panel.

Additional Learning Needs Reform Update

We thanked the Head of Vulnerable Learners for attending and taking us through the update on Additional Learning Needs Reform.

We heard that the ALNET strategy has been reviewed and finalised, with a new strategy drafted that aligns to the regional strategy with outstanding actions being transferred to the new strategy. It now covers the period 2022 to 2027 and has 4 priority areas: Schools, Post 16, Collaboration and Early years.

We heard about the successes and the challenges being experienced. The Panel noted that despite the Welsh Government's wish to establish a less adversarial system the council has seen an increase in the number of requests for tribunals and that this has placed pressure on services and has highlighted a need for an internal review into processes and procedures to ensure there is an appropriate level of resource.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TRUSLOW A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

GUILDHALL, SWANSEA, SA1 4PE / NEUADD Y DDINAS, ABERTAWE, SA1 4PE

www.swansea.gov.uk / www.abertawe.gov.uk

I dderbyn yr wybodaeth hon mewn fformat arall neu yn Gymraeg, cysylltwch â'r person uchod
To receive this information in alternative format, or in Welsh please contact the above

We were pleased to hear that extensive work is underway to moderate, quality assure and support schools to achieve a consistent, equitable offer to all learners. Also, that collaboration with the local health board is strengthening with a productive partnership developing.

We asked about post-16 education and whether we ensure that the organisations that deliver services are fulfilling their roles effectively. We heard that we do work with our key delivery partners to ensure they are as strong as they can be to deliver what is required and we are doing this in a joined-up manner.

We agreed that ALN reform is an ongoing process and we would like to continue to keep a watching brief on progress.

Curriculum for Wales progress update

We thanked the Head of the Achievement and Partnership Services for the verbal update on progress with the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales.

We heard that there are so many different things to work on, but that it is a positive story here in Swansea. We were told that the Welsh Government do recognise the curriculum design is an ongoing cyclical process of engagement, design, planning, training and evaluation, and this is something that continues with us here in Swansea. Also, that it is an ongoing process, with each school's curriculum continuing to evolve to meet the needs of their learners. You said that this was an evolving piece of work and you are very pleased with how it is progressing.

We were interested to hear about some of the next steps for implementation, including:

- The School Improvement Team focusing on the effectiveness of school curriculum plans. Supporting schools to ensure they have been able to define how they will measure pupil progress and provide the graduated approach to professional learning so that schools can access support equitably and when they require it.
- Maximising the available funding to support key areas like on numeracy and digital competency frameworks.
- Securing additional support to deliver the Welsh in education strategic plan.
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- Strengthening our focus with our secondary colleagues to make sure that they have the support they require as they move on that journey for the curriculum for Wales.

We asked whether teaching staff were getting enough support and whether schools are taking all staff on the journey with them/us. We heard that this is the case and what is being seen on the ground now is distributive leadership across schools and how they and staff are working collaboratively. So, it is not just head teachers and senior leadership team alone driving this work but teams within the schools taking it forward.

We also asked about the workload in schools in relation to the new curriculum, especially when you include the pressures of working and assisting other schools across clusters. We were told there has been plenty of national discussion on this, but that we are also looking at this at a local level. We have been working with our schools to look at what that burden is looking like and seeing what we as a local authority can do to support our schools in that area. The sharing aspect is really important and in

the strong clusters we see that. What we see with the cluster working is rather than everybody trying to do everything, they are taking what worked in another area, looking at how they can adapt that to work in their own schools.

Education Estyn Inspection - Progress with recommendations

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- A three-year post-16 strategy is now in operation for Swansea.
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Recommendation 2 – Strengthen Welsh-medium provision across all ages and areas of the local authority.

- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) was approved by Welsh Government and a delivery plan has been developed outlining the key work streams. Progress with the plan is being closely monitored and first annual progress report will be submitted to Welsh Government in July 2023.
- Discussion on key priorities regularly takes place with Partneriaeth Addysg Gymraeg Abertawe.
- Since adoption of the WESP, options have been explored for increasing the equity of the offer Welsh Medium childcare and primary school provision.
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- Swansea schools Siarter Iaith journey continues to move forward with a number of schools receiving bronze, silver and gold accreditations.
- Additional information to be added to the councils website around benefits of Welsh-medium education.
- Welsh-medium clusters have been working together with the council to identify potential models for Welsh-medium specialist provision in the future.

- Staffing through the medium of Welsh was raised as a significant challenge in all key priority areas, including early years, teaching staff, support staff and staff with ALN expertise.

We also thank you and Director of Education for outlining the key issues facing education currently and we have aligned our work plan for 2023/24 to reflect this.

Your Response

We would welcome your comments on any of the issues raised in this letter but on this occasion, we do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely

COUNCILLOR LYNDON JONES

Convener, Education Scrutiny Performance Panel

Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk

Agenda Item 6



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 13 July 2023

Vulnerable Learners Service School Attendance Policy

| | |
|--|--|
| Purpose: | To consider the progression of the attendance action plan and the draft Schools Attendance Policy. |
| Content: | An overview of the work undertaken to improve attendance. |
| Councillors are Being asked to: | Consider the information provided and give views. |
| Legal Councillor: | Cabinet Member for Education and Learning |
| Lead Officer & Report Author: | Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Service Kate.phillips2@swansea.gov.uk Helen Howells, Team Manager for Pupil Support Helen.howells@swansea.gov.uk |

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Swansea Council is committed to providing an 'excellent education for all by working together'. It is widely recognised that regular school attendance has a positive effect on children and young people and a strong impact on learner outcomes, standards, and progression. We recognise that attendance supports the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and on the conceptual understanding needed for further study and success in the workplace. Analysis shows that examination outcomes link strongly to attendance rates. Additionally, good attendance also has a positive effect on wellbeing, therefore establishing good attendance patterns from an early age is vital for social development.
- 1.2 Improving behaviour and attendance is an integral part of our wider educational initiatives set out in our Inclusion Strategy. These initiatives aim to ensure that children and young people do not become disengaged from education by ensuring that provision is suitable to their individual needs.

2. Attendance in Swansea

- 2.1 Traditionally attendance percentages have been above 93% in a 5 year trend 2014-2019. During the 2021/22 academic year the average attendance in Swansea Primary schools was 90.1%, Secondary school average attendance was 86.6%. For our current academic year to date figures show that primary school average attendance increased slightly to 91.2% and secondary schools to 88.4%. This is still below where we want it to be. A few schools have made improvements and we want to learn from what they have achieved and share this practice. For other schools' attendance has not improved as we would have hoped and so we need to secure more targeted support to support improvement.
- 2.2 Low attendance in schools is a national picture. For a few learners and parents, the barriers to learning they face have been exacerbated since the pandemic. In some cases, previous habits of good attendance may not have been re-established, and more casual attitudes to learning and school attendance have increased. In addition, campaigns for promoting good attendance were disrupted during the pandemic.
- 2.3 NSPCC findings in 2021 have shown that post pandemic there is an increase in children and young people's vulnerability. Older children and adolescents reported higher and more severe rates of depressive symptoms. Our secondary schools have been especially affected and we can see this in their attendance.
- 2.5 Higher anxiety amongst our youth, coupled with waiting lists for services such as Neuro-developmental (ND) pathways, Children and Adolescent Mental Health services (CAMHs) and mental health support are challenging. There is higher demand on Early Help Hubs (EHH) and Youth Offending Services (YOS) prevention. The cost of living crisis has caused further challenges for families and attendance at schools has not recovered as we'd hoped.
- 2.6 While recognising these considerable pressures the Education Directorate recognises our approaches to promoting attendance needs to change and respond to the new challenges. We also acknowledge that a review of process within the Education Welfare Service (EWS) is needed to enable a proactive approach to improve the current situation.

2. Attendance Action Plan

- 2.1 In response to levels of attendance dropping for the fourth consecutive year a clear, concise action plan was created to improve processes, and introduce a smarter way of working within the EWS. The Action plan has been RAG (red, amber, green) rated to visualise progress.
- 2.2 The plan has five key priorities:

- Ensure every school has an attendance policy which is regularly reviewed but which also reflects a holistic approach to behaviour, attendance, wellbeing, and welfare thus setting the ethos where every learner can succeed.
 - Produce a clear, concise guide to the work of the Education Welfare Service and embed the recommendations of the 2019/20 consultation outcomes.
 - Consider the increase in Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and ensure this informs developments to support the Whole School Approach (WSA).
 - Analyse attendance data and use proactively to target need and set targets.
 - Ensure prevention and early intervention strategies linked to other priority areas to ensure children want to attend school.
 - Communicate expectations to partners and stakeholders, particularly governing bodies.
- 2.3 An attendance policy has been drafted and all stakeholders have had the opportunity to contemplate its content. A head teacher's pack is in development to complement the policy and to ensure consistency of practise throughout Swansea.
- 2.4 An attendance audit has been undertaken at Maes Derw PRU, with recommendations for improvements and a change to process. The newly allocated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is now supporting home visits to help gauge pupil voice. This has had a positive effect on attendance at Maes Derw PRU, as their attendance is now 3% higher than last year. Attendance audits will now be rolled out to the special schools in the first instance.
- 2.5 Through the appointment of the Lead Officer for Education Safeguarding and Welfare, the team are now working for more strategically. Communication has been improved within the team, the Lead officer has implemented regular weekly meeting with a consistent agenda focusing on individual schools and sharing of good practise. A brochure is in development listing strategies and interventions that have proven outcomes in increasing attendance, this will be a toolkit of good practise.
- 2.6 Collation of data has been improved, request forms have now been digitalised and moving forward the team will be able to analyse requests and identify areas of need. Using techniques from the toolkit, EWOs will be able to advise appropriately, and use targeted intervention strategies.
- 2.7 An officer is focussing solely on Elective Home Education (EHE), to ensure the continuation of effective work with parents to support all education needs, especially at the transition points of becoming EHE and with those who wish to return to school.

3. Further strategies to improve attendance

- 3.1 Welsh Government have recognised that further funding is necessary to strengthen the support to schools provided by the EWS. As such they have provided a small grant to increase the capacity within the EWS. This is timely as core budgets have decreased since 2019, and the funding will help us to trial new ways of working.
- 3.2 The grant will also allow temporary arrangements to promote better attendance through the focus on creating closer relationships with families. It also ensures capacity for the team to become integrated in the Community Focussed Schools initiative, which builds upon the understanding that 'it takes a village to raise a child' and embeds the idea that attendance everyone's responsibility.
- 3.3 Professional development for EWOs has improved. Training has already been undertaken in a number of areas, most notably in EBSA. Additionally, a new bespoke training programme is being developed from September to ensure all educational processes are understood by every EWO. Furthermore, all EWOs are also taking part in a National EWS development day in July, to discuss new guidance, and share practice across local authorities.
- 3.4 Data is being collated to identify school avoidance (also known as school refusal). Firstly, to understand the scope of the problem and secondly to identify an EBSA specialist from within the team to work with schools and families to implement strategies to support reintegration to school.
- 3.5 The EWS will work more closely with the Inclusion team, to support early intervention strategies, preventing dis-engagement from school through a number of interventions.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications within this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications within this report.

6. Equality & Engagement Implications

- 6.1 The report is for information and discussion.

Background papers:

Appendices:

Appendix A – Attendance Action Plan

Appendix B – Draft Attendance Policy

Appendix A – Attendance Action Plan

In response to levels of attendance dropping for the fourth consecutive year we propose to produce a clear, concise plan to improve processes, and introduce a smarter way of working within the EWS. We want to work with all stakeholders to develop a new Attendance Policy which encapsulates the ethos of inclusivity and thus ensure better outcomes for all our learners.

| Date | Action | By Whom | Outcomes | Progress to date | Complete by |
|----------|--|----------|--|---|-------------|
| 15/01/23 | Ensure every school has an attendance policy which is regularly reviewed but which also reflects a holistic approach to behaviour, attendance, wellbeing and welfare thus setting the ethos where every learner can succeed. | HH / EWS | <p>Improved consistency across all settings</p> <p>A co-produced policy with clear expectations in relation to attendance monitoring for all stakeholder's including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/carers • Schools • The Local Authority | Initial draft in final stages | March 23 |
| | | | | Response flowchart produced and implemented, needs to be fully embedded. | Sept 22 |
| | | | | Letters associated with process including those that accompany Fixed penalty notices in the process of being updated | March 23 |
| | | | | Task and finish workshop with EWS organised. | Jan 23 |
| | | | | Task and finish workshop with headteachers at Cross phase meeting planned. Discussion planned as to how best to engage learner voice. | Feb 23 |
| | | | | Parent/carer forum contacted to support with parent/carer voice | Jan 23 |
| | | | | Policy sign off via CDC | April 23 |

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| <p>23/01/23</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 16</p> | <p>Produce a clear, concise guide to the work of the Education Welfare Service and embed the recommendations of the 2019/20 consultation outcomes.</p> | <p>HH/ EWS</p> | <p>Stakeholder input to ensure consistency of practise and targeted response from the EWS. Smarter ways of working to suit current social climate.</p> <p>Increased school attendance.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for learners</p> | <p>The inclusion strategy has been finalised which provides the strategic direction for improving attendance.</p> <p>Review of the wider Pupil Support Team undertaken and a new post established to provide a strategic lead on attendance and exclusion. Officer is appointed and will take up post on 27th February 2023. This will increase capacity in the team and allow for greater strategic oversight and review of newly developed policy to be implemented.</p> <p>Task and finish workshop with headteachers at Cross phase meeting to include discussion about review of EWS process.</p> | <p>Jan 23</p> <p>Feb 23</p> <p>Feb 23</p> |
| <p>Sept 23</p> | <p>Consider the increase in Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and ensure this informs developments to support EHPW.</p> | <p>KB/ HH</p> | <p>Support schools to engage with parents and carers on attendance strategies.</p> | <p>Whole team EBSA training organised.</p> <p>Review of the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing funding and closer engagement with strategic group to ensure targeted resource to increase attendance and engagement</p> | <p>May 23</p> <p>Sept 22 and ongoing</p> |

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| | | | | with a specific focus on emotional based school attendance (EBSA). Unfortunately, budget pressures have meant this funding has now been off set against existing salaries and the work has been incorporated into existing work rather than being able to appoint a dedicated officer. | |
| Sept 22 Page 17 | Analyse attendance data and use proactively to target need and set targets. | MJ/ EWS/ HH | Regular Data analysis to inform practise. The Education Welfare Service have been asked to work differently to provide intense targeted support for those schools with attendance below 90%. Analysis of the effectiveness of fixed penalty notices | Some improvements in attendance have been recorded in the Autumn term, the average attendance for all secondary schools is 2% higher than in the previous year. Further embed the sharing of good practise through agreed processes Fixed term penalty notices have been reinstated, 112 have been issued in the autumn term. | Ongoing March 23 Sept 22 |
| | Ensure prevention and early intervention strategies linked to other priority areas to ensure children want to attend school. | EWS/ RB/ ST/ HH | Support families to reintegrate children who have been electively home educated (EHE) to return to school. | An officer has been appointed to support electively home educated (EHE) families. This post is funded by Welsh Government grant specifically targeted at EHE. There was a significant increase in families | Nov 22 |

| | | | | | |
|--------|---|----------------------|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>Link with Education Inclusion Officer to ensure bespoke educational activities are explored and integrated as part of the curriculum offer</p> <p>Consider attendance holistically and ensure effective approaches are in place across the directorate and wider Council, for example, ALNIT, Early Help Hubs</p> | <p>choosing to home educate post pandemic This trend has now settled, 5.2 per 1000 pupils are EHE in 2022 compared with 7.2 per 1000 pupils in 2021. Due to budget constraints it may not be possible to continue with this post and the work will need to be incorporated into existing work.</p> <p>An education inclusion officer has been seconded to scope targeted external provision which promotes engagement and contributes to the wellbeing of the learner.</p> <p>Monthly meetings have been set up with ALNIT to discuss crossover cases.</p> <p>Engage with the EHH to discuss the outcomes of joint meetings.</p> | <p>Jan 23</p> <p>Dec 22</p> <p>Feb 23</p> |
| Feb 23 | Communicate expectations to partners and stakeholders, particularly governing bodies. Develop authority wide communications on attendance via social media channels | HH/ EWS/ RJ/JF | <p>Consistency of attendance expectations to all stakeholders.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for learners</p> | <p>Initial discussions around social media communication taken place.</p> <p>Finalise communication strategy for attendance</p> | <p>Jan 23</p> <p>tbc</p> |

Swansea Council

Excellent Education for All by Working Together



Attendance Policy 2023

www.abertawe.gov.uk

www.swansea.gov.uk



Cyngor **Abertawe**
Swansea Council

About this document

This guidance is aimed at maintained schools and school governors, pupil referral units (PRUs), parents/carers, and local authority officers. It sets out the Swansea Council's commitment to ensure high levels of learner engagement and attendance, working towards an excellent education for all, by making sure no child is left behind. These approaches and resources will be developed and built upon so that they are aligned to the needs of children and parents/carers

Review

The policy will be amended annually to ensure compliance with National guidance.

DRAFT

If you need further information about the Swansea Council Attendance Policy, please contact education@swansea.gov.uk

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Terms and definitions

The following terms and definitions are used in this document.

School unless qualified otherwise refers to maintained, primary, secondary and special schools, voluntary schools and PRUs. For PRUs, 'governors' refers to the management committee members and 'headteacher' to the teacher in charge of a PRU.

The definition of **parent** is set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and includes:

- Any person who, although not a parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person, and
- Any person who has care of a child or young person.

Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent.

Learner unless known otherwise, refers to a child, young person, pupil or student of compulsory school age.

Compulsory school age. Under section 8 of the Education Act 1996, children become of compulsory school age on the 31 December, 31 March and 31 August (whichever comes first) following their 5th birthday. A young person ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.

Attendance There is no statutory minimum level of attendance specified in legislation. Traditionally, good attendance depends on circumstances, but is usually taken to be around 95%. For data collection and statistical purposes, '**persistent absence**' has been defined in Wales as being absent for over 20% of half day school sessions. Evidence suggests that even small increases in absence above this level can have a disproportionate adverse effect on learners. **It is also recognised that the earlier the intervention, the more likely it is that a positive outcome will be achieved. As such, the Welsh Government propose that the statistical definition of persistent absence be amended to over 10% of sessions, which is the definition currently in use in England.**

Family Engagement Officer refers to a dedicated member of staff working with parents and could have the title of family liaison officer, community pastoral worker, family support worker, or wellbeing officer.

Education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) refers to education provision to meet specific needs of pupils who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a mainstream or special school. In law, local authorities are responsible for providing these services.

Full-time education - Inclusion and Pupil Support Guidance 2006 defines full time education as:

| | |
|---|------------|
| Key Stage 1: | 21 hours |
| Key Stage 2: | 23.5 hours |
| Key Stage 3 / 4 (Including Year 10 only): | 24 hours |
| Key Stage 4 (Year 11): | 25 hours |

Section 1 Introduction

This policy provides guidance around school attendance for learners in Swansea. In developing its policy and practice for promoting school attendance the Council ensure that all practises will be reviewed annually in line with national and local priorities.

Attending school or educational provision regularly is important for every child's future. Good attendance at school is associated with a higher educational achievement and attainment and improved job prospects. The significance of school attendance must not and cannot be underestimated. It is vital that children and young people have access to appropriate and effective learning opportunities and provision. Any barriers to learning need to be identified early and removed, so that children and young people can engage in educational provision they need to achieve their full potential.

1.1 Vision

Swansea Council is committed to providing an '**excellent education for all by working together**'. It is widely recognised that regular school attendance has a positive effect on children and young people and a strong impact on learner outcomes, standards and progression. We recognise that attendance supports the development of literacy and numeracy skills, and on the conceptual understanding needed for further study and success in the workplace. Analysis shows that examination outcomes link strongly to attendance rates. Additionally, good attendance also has a positive effect on wellbeing, therefore establishing good attendance patterns from an early age is vital for social development. Furthermore, punctuality is also vital; when learners arrive late at school can be very disruptive for the child, the teacher, and the other children in the class.

Improving behaviour and attendance is an integral part of our wider educational initiatives set out in our Inclusion Strategy. These initiatives aim to ensure that children and young people do not become disengaged from education by ensuring that provision is suitable to their individual needs.

Swansea Council also recognised that attending school also supports learners' wider development as full and rounded members of society. The Local Authority is committed to embedding the Curriculum for Wales in schools, which is based on four purposes that demonstrate the breadth of the academic, wellbeing and social benefits that learners gain by attending school. Because of the well-established links between attendance and attainment, wellbeing and citizenship, improving attendance is an important policy. Internationally, the advantages of education are such that the right to a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities is one of the seven core aims of the Welsh Government based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

1.2 Working Together

Attendance cannot be considered in isolation. The many interrelated and overlapping causes of absence and the varied nature of the learner experience in school and at home mean that whole school strategies and strong multi-agency working arrangements are needed, designed to support all learners.

Swansea Education Directorate works closely with schools and stakeholders and is committed to ensuring:

1. Children and young people have a right of access to an education appropriate to their individual needs

2. That a balance of rights and responsibilities between children and young people, parents, schools, other professionals and the wider community should be maintained
3. Early assessment, identification and intervention are keys to safeguarding the welfare and interests of children and young people. Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school and wider community.

1.3 Commitment to educational engagement in Schools

Schools in Swansea will promote positive behaviour and good attendance through their use of an appropriate curriculum which is geared to the child's ability. Schools will aim to create a learning community which benefits from the positive behaviour, regular attendance and well-being of its pupils and staff.

All learners and their parents should be made aware of who they can speak to if they are unhappy in school, and they should be encouraged to do so at the earliest possible time so as to prevent escalation. There are a number of issues that may be preventing learners from attending a mainstream setting, such as mental health or behaviour challenges, and in some cases alternative arrangements such as local authority home tuition or attending a PRU may be appropriate. But any such arrangements should generally be only a short-term measure and for the vast majority of learners, the long term goal should always be to return learners to their usual place of education as soon as practicable.

For some learners and parents, the barriers to learning they face have been made worse since the pandemic. In some cases, the intensive support provided during the pandemic improved relationships between school and parents and led to better attendance. In other cases, previous habits of good attendance may not have been re-established, and more casual attitudes to learning and school attendance may have increased. In addition, campaigns for promoting good attendance were disrupted during the pandemic.

It is well established that factors such as poverty, additional learning needs and certain protected characteristics are associated with learners having a greater risk of absence from school and can exacerbate the challenges they already face. Supporting good attendance is, therefore, particularly important in these cases. Swansea council is committed to tackling the effects of [poverty](#) and provides information to all stakeholders regarding [ALN](#) reform.

Attending school is also crucial from a safeguarding perspective, ensuring that children are seen, safe and heard, and not exploited. Active follow-up of absence is essential as a major element in all learners care and protection. This is one of the main reasons why recording and monitoring attendance accurately is so important.

Some key actions which can support positive attendance include the following:

- Building positive relationships when children first start school.
- Providing clear guidance and information on attendance and the school's expectations.
- Allowing parents to feedback their views on attendance and to be involved in co-constructing the policy and approaches that the school adopt.

1.4 Absences

The Local Authority accept that on some occasions it may not be possible, and indeed maybe counterproductive, for a child to attend school for a number of individual reasons. An absence from school can be defined as either authorised or unauthorised.

An authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for absence. Only schools, not parents/carers, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so. Any absence that is not authorised by the school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

1.4.1 Holidays in term time and extended overseas trips

Parents must apply in advance to take [trip overseas or otherwise](#) in term time. Requests should be considered individually and schools can invite parents to discuss any such proposals. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday or trip if they believe there are special circumstances that warrant it.

If a school agrees absence and the pupil goes on holiday or trip for 10 days or less, absence is authorised. A school can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances. If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on the holiday or trip, the absence will be unauthorised. If parents keeps a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is also recorded as unauthorised. If the school considers that there are exceptional circumstances why the pupil should be granted approval for an overseas trip of more than 10 days, the approval can be given and the absence would be authorised, at the discretion of the Head teacher.

1.5 Contributing factors: the many possible reasons for absence

Attendance problems are often a symptom of some underlying cause. There are many possible underlying reasons for low attendance aside from physical ill health. These other reasons often broadly relate to wellbeing or mental health issues. And for some learners, low attendance can be as a result of a number of factors.

School should consider whether there are school-related factors or worries that are affecting a learner's attendance, such as:

1. experience of bullying or discrimination
2. unmet or unidentified additional learning needs or disability
3. anxieties about school work or examinations
4. emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)

It is well established that some learners, including those eligible for free school meals, with additional learning needs, having English as an additional language, or have previously been excluded are more at risk of having lower attendance. Therefore, it is crucial that all learners are included and supported by schools whatever their needs, experiences, personal characteristics or home circumstances. Current additional learning needs [reforms](#) place learners at the centre of the process of identifying needs and required provision, to encourage learner-centred planning that should lead to a better understanding of what is important to the learner and help identify difficulties before they escalate.

Additionally there are a number of factors which may place learners particularly at risk of missing school, and statutory [guidance](#) is in place to help identify and support some of the following:

1. Children who are [looked after](#)
2. Young [carers](#)
3. [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller](#) children and children of transient parents
4. Asylum seekers, refugees, new migrants and children of migrant workers
5. Children in the youth justice system or with parents in the justice system
6. Children with long-term medical or mental health issues
7. Children who have had [adverse childhood experiences](#)
8. Children of service parents and [armed forces](#) parents
9. Children and young people who are at risk of forced marriage
10. Children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation, including children who have been trafficked
11. Children and young people of homeless parents living in temporary accommodation, houses of multiple occupancy or bed and breakfasts
12. Children of parents fleeing domestic violence or living in women's refuges
13. Young parents and pregnant young women
14. Children who are on the child protection register or who are a child in need.

Prevention and early intervention are crucial in ensuring issues do not escalate or become entrenched. Swansea Council are aware that attendance is often a symptom of an underlying issue and that successful approaches are rooted in working with the child, parents and other agencies to identify and resolve these issues. As such, schools need to be able to identify and address early signs that there may be a problem as quickly as possible.

Swansea council provide advice and guidance to support schools in engaging its most vulnerable learners. Ensuring an approach based in the rights of the child, using:

1. A learner-approach, based on the rights of the child.
2. A focus on learner wellbeing and mental health
3. A whole-school, whole-system approach
4. Building positive relationships, culture and ethos
5. Family engagement and multi-agency support
6. Prevention, early intervention and adopting sustainable ways of working

Section 2 Swansea Council Commitment to raising attendance

Swansea Council recognises that punctual and regular school attendance is an essential for social inclusion and effective learning. Every child matters therefore we are concerned that for a small number of children, low school attendance is a direct cause of their social exclusion and underachievement.

We respect and recognise that some parents may choose to [home educate](#) their children rather than send them to school, and Swansea council will work with families to ensure they have the support they need.

For children who are on roll of a school or pupil referral unit, in order to improve levels of school attendance and punctuality, Swansea Council will employ the key strategies below:-

1. Establish an informed, targeted approach to supporting schools where attendance is below expected levels. Analyse attendance data and use proactively.
2. Consider the increase in Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) and ensure this informs developments to support Emotional Health and Psychological well-being.
3. Support schools to use attendance codes effectively and explore more effective monitoring of individual learner attendance particularly in relation to EBSA.
4. Consider attendance holistically and ensure effective approaches are in place across the directorate and wider Council, for example, ALNIT, Early Help Hubs.
5. Ensure every school has an attendance policy which is regularly reviewed but which also reflects a holistic approach to behaviour, attendance, wellbeing and welfare thus setting the ethos where every learner can succeed.
6. Ensure prevention and early intervention strategies linked to other priority areas to ensure children want to attend school.
7. Support schools to develop engaging and exciting curriculum offer which meets the needs of all learners.
8. Develop authority wide communications on attendance via social media channels.
9. Support schools to engage with parents and carers on attendance strategies.
10. Communicate expectations to partners and stakeholders, including governing bodies.

Expected Impact:

1. Improved attendance in all schools and pupil referral unit (PRU).
2. Better outcomes for children and young people (CYP).
3. Improve consistency across school settings.
4. Clear expectations in relation to attendance monitoring.
5. Reduce persistent absenteeism.

2.1 Roles and responsibilities: Attendance is everybody's business.

Ensuring regular school attendance is a demanding area of work that depends on establishing and utilising close working relationships between parents/carers, pupils, schools, the LA, Education Welfare Service (EWS) and other professionals working with children and young people in social, educational and health care settings.

A key element of any successful working relationship is a clear understanding of each person's role and responsibilities, and as such this section sets out to clarify the roles and responsibilities for those people engaged with responding to attendance issues.

2.2 Responsibilities of Schools and Governing Bodies

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance. All schools in Swansea should work hard to adopt a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and encourage parents to take an active role in the schooling of their children, as this can play a major role in improving levels of attendance and punctuality and in reducing absenteeism.

Mainstream settings have a range of responsibilities for learner attendance. For example, they are legally required by way of the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to maintain an accurate learner attendance register and to provide data on pupil absence to the local authority under the School Performance Information (Wales) Regulations 2011/1963 and The School Information (Wales) Regulations 2011/1944.

Schools in Swansea are also expected to publish or make available an easily understood, regularly reviewed attendance strategy that sets out the principles underlying its approach to improving learner engagement and attendance, and how the school intends to develop a positive culture around attendance.

They should communicate and engage with parents effectively to make sure they are fully aware of their [attendance policy](#). This should include the steps they will take to provide learners with engaging and relevant teaching and learning opportunities, and the support they will provide to meet learner wellbeing and mental health needs.

School strategies should be developed in partnership with learners and parents and show the importance and advantages of good attendance as well as the possible implications of absence. They should work with parents to identify any possible reasons that could affect attendance and direct them to sources of support.

School governors need to ensure that they are well-informed about the school's attendance position and priorities, and its strategies for improvement. They should receive sufficient training from their local authority to enable them to contribute to the schools' overall strategy for improving attendance and feel confident to challenge where there is insufficient improvement.

2.3 Responsibilities of Parents

Parents have a statutory responsibility for ensuring that their compulsory school-age children receive a suitable education appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude and to any additional learning needs they may have (see section 7 of the Education Act 1996). This can be through regular attendance at school, agreed education provision other than at school, or by elective home education.

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. A full list of how parents can support their child's attendance and punctuality can be found on page 6 of the [All Wales Attendance Framework](#)

2.4 Responsibilities of the child / young person

We want all our learners in Swansea to become lifelong, independent learners, with a positive working ethic. All children have the right to a full time education which is appropriate to their needs. Schools want the best for all their pupils and young person themselves can also be responsible for good school attendance.

Therefore, children and young people should be supported to:

1. Attend school when parents/carers agree they are well enough to.
2. Tell their teacher or trusted adult when they are upset or unhappy.
3. Work with the school and their parents / carers to put a plan in place to increase attendance where necessary.
4. Older pupils should be punctual to all lessons they are required to attend.
5. Accept all offers of help.

2.5 Responsibilities of PRUs and Independent Schools

PRUs are legally a type of school. They fall within the scope of the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2010](#) which place a duty on the proprietor of a school to keep accurate admission and attendance registers for pupils registered at the school (on the admission register). The local authority which established and maintains the school is the “proprietor” upon whom the duty falls in relation to PRUs, but they will necessarily be reliant upon information gathered by the PRU for this purpose.

Independent Schools are also subject to these requirements. In addition, under the [Education \(Information About Children in Alternative Provision\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2009](#), an independent school providing education to a child that is arranged and funded by a local authority in Wales in accordance with section 19A of the Education Act 1996, is required to make available to the child’s parents, a summary of the child’s attendance record, showing the number of authorised and unauthorised absences and the number of possible attendances, for each school year.

2.6 Responsibilities of the Local Authority

On behalf of the local authority, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) provides support for schools, learners and parents to ensure regular attendance and address problems relating to absence. The service liaises with other agencies and provides an important link between home and school, helping parents and teachers to work in partnership.

By way of section [436A of the Education Act 1996](#), Swansea Local Authority makes arrangements to establish the identities (so far as it is possible to do so) of children in their area who are of compulsory school age but are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. The council has a duty to identify, as far as is possible, children who may be or who are missing education. Contacting parents immediately can prevent absences from becoming prolonged and has a safeguarding function.

Under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, the LA has a duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Further information can be found in Section 4 of the [‘Inclusion and Pupil Support’](#) guidance document.

Section 3 The Role of Education Welfare Service

This section aims to clarify the role of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) in Swansea, to ensure most effective use by all stakeholders.

3.1 Role and Purpose of EWS

The list below is the main roles that the EWS undertakes and is not to be taken as exhaustive:

1. To review attendance register returns under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 and any associated guidance.
2. To recognise the requirements of both the legislation and underlying principles related to data protection, access to personal files and pupil records under the GDPR.
3. To support the school to develop a whole school approach to managing attendance and addressing potential wellbeing and safeguarding issues that could be affecting absenteeism and poor punctuality.
4. To refer and work with other agencies when appropriate to ensure a holistic approach to welfare and attendance issues.
5. To collate, interpret and present data on issues relating to attendance, when required.
6. EWOs will provide attendance reports on whole school attendance, individual pupil data and vulnerable groups data.
7. To provide advice and guidance to school staff on the management of SIMs.
8. To support schools in their development and review of their school attendance policies and assist in implementing strategies to raise attendance.
9. To link with relevant staff to plan intervention for learners with persistent absence.
10. Ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to referral, recording, reporting and case closing systems.
11. Provide advice on proven good practice, and to share good practise across the LA appropriately.

3.2 Education Welfare Service Principles

The EWS is committed to the fundamental principle, that early intervention strategies and partnership working, is crucial in ensuring the protection and wellbeing of all children and young people. It will endeavour to uphold this through:

1. The EWS provides professional, quality support to schools, children, young people and parents and provides appropriate support to education settings, so that children and young people can benefit from the educational opportunities provided to them.
2. The service supports good school attendance and high standards of pupil welfare and will support schools to create a culture which encourages attendance.
3. The EWS will explore the reasons behind school absence, offer information and guidance, undertake planned interventions, advise parents about specialist support services and make referrals to appropriate services when required.
4. The EWS works collaboratively with other agencies to support all children and young people with specific emphasis placed on safeguarding and child protection issues.
5. The EWS recognises that children and young people with additional learning needs and also families who are vulnerable and or socio-economically disadvantaged may, at times, require extra support.

3.3 EWS and School collaborative working

Attendance is the overall responsibility of the whole school and the EWS will work in partnership with schools in raising attendance. The EWS undertakes proceedings on behalf of the local authority, in respect of parents who do not ensure their children's regular attendance at school or enrol them at school or education otherwise than at school. The EWS will make relevant assessments and action plans in partnership with learners, parents, school staff and other relevant parties, concerning attendance at school or alternative educational provision. The Education welfare officer (EWO) has a dual role to play as a provider of a service to the school and as mediator between home and school. Schools will normally have a named EWO who has a duty to visit the school regularly.

The EWO's time is inevitably limited. Schools should, therefore, have a clear arrangement on how and when a referral to the EWS is made and to be sure all staff understands the procedures. Prior to a referral two things need to happen:

1. A school's own procedures for dealing with absence should have been exhausted.
2. A referral form should always be used so there is a written record of the pupil's attendance, lateness, strengths and weaknesses, relationships with peers and teachers, past and present contact with external agencies and any other relevant information from the school's records.

3.4 Rights of the Individual

The EWS believes that children and young people have the right to equal opportunities and are committed to ensuring that all children and young people gain maximum benefit from education regardless of learning needs, ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, language or nationality. The EWS will acknowledge the rights of those using the service to access advice and support from the EWS in obtaining services to which they are entitled. They will act as advocate, where appropriate, for children, young people and families when they seek to obtain the services they are entitled to.

3.5 Confidentiality

The EWS will maintain confidence and participation in services and thereby help protect children's health and wellbeing. However, confidentiality may be breached where this is in the best interests of the child. The EWS will conduct working relationships with children, young people and parents in an open and honest way which allows for the sharing of information that is properly documented.

3.6 Anti-discriminatory practice

The EWS pays due regard to The Swansea Council [Strategic Equality Plan](#). It aims to provide EWS support on an equitable basis according to need, regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, social background or additional learning needs. It will promote equal opportunities within all aspects of work, and will confront discrimination whenever it may arise.

3.7 Information management

The EWS will ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to referral, recording and reporting systems. The service will recognise the need for objectivity, accuracy and confidentiality where appropriate, and recognise the requirements of both the legislation and underlying principles related to data protection, access to personal files and pupil records. The EWS will collate, interpret and present data on issues relating to relevant aspects of EWS work and then use it to plan and manage the work of the EWS.

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Section 4 Safeguarding and child protection

All schools and education settings have statutory duties to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of learners. All staff members must be aware of and understand how to contact and raise concerns with the designated safeguarding person for the school. Absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and tracking and monitoring attendance has a crucial safeguarding role. Absence can signal possible wellbeing issues or problems at home.

4.1 Keeping Learners Safe

[Keeping learners safe](#) 2022 is guidance for local authorities and governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children. In relation to the work of the EWS it states:

1. Education settings should use their attendance policy and practice to ensure they are in regular contact with parents if a child is absent from school without authorisation or if they have patterns of absence. The child's attendance record at school could be an indicator of safeguarding concerns and an opportunity to identify and deal with abuse such as child exploitation.
2. If a child is absent without notification it could also be without the knowledge of their parent or carer and could be an early sign that the child is missing from home or care. The education setting should ensure any absence is followed up quickly to ensure the child is safe and not missing from home or care.
3. If the education setting identifies the child is missing from home or care they should refer to the Wales Practice Guide 'Safeguarding children who go missing from home or care'.
4. Schools should regularly review attendance data to identify and respond to children who are at risk. Schools should have first day absence reporting processes in place and processes for deciding whether welfare sightings are needed. These systems should ensure back-up staff are in place when key attendance staff are themselves absent.
5. Where a child is registered at a school and subsequently attends a setting such as EOTAS the original school should assume responsibility for checking the child's attendance (at both settings) on a daily basis.

One of the specific circumstances in which data protection legislation allows the sharing of sensitive personal information without the consent of the child or parent is to safeguard children and protect them and others from harm. All EWOs in Swansea are able to access training to understand when information should be shared with other stakeholders and what information may be disclosed.

Section 5 Legal duties of the EWS

All attempts to engage with the child and family will be undertaken prior to consideration of the implementation of fines or prosecution. Prevention and early intervention strategies is preferred. However there are occasions whereby the LA has to exercise its rights under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

5.1 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

If a pupil who is registered at a school does not attend that school regularly, and attempts by the EWO and the school do not success in ensuring regular attendance for that pupil, then the Council will, ordinarily consider issuing the parent with a [fixed penalty notice](#).

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence. The use of legal action against parents will be considered as part of a planned intervention to improve attendance. This can include the issuing of fixed penalty notices under section 444A of that Act. If fixed penalty notices are used, then local authorities should take great care to ensure that notices are properly issued and only issued for offences where the local authority is willing and able to prosecute in the event the parent does not pay the fixed penalty.

Unless there are known mitigating circumstances, the Council will consider taking legal action by issuing a summons against the parents to appear before the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. In deciding whether or not to take legal action, the EWO must be satisfied that:-

1. There is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction; it must consider what the defence case may be and how this is likely to affect the prosecution case.
2. It is in the public interest to prosecute; in cases of any seriousness, a prosecution will usually take place unless there are public interest factors pointing against prosecution, which clearly outweigh those in favour.
3. Any action it takes complies with the Human Rights Act.

If after legal action has been taken the pupil still fails to attend school regularly, the EWO will, if deemed appropriate, take further legal action.

5.2 Education Supervision Order (ESO)

Before initiating a prosecution under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act an EWO will consider whether it is appropriate to apply for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) under section 36 of the 1989 Children Act. The purpose of an ESO is to place a child who is not being properly educated under the supervision of the Local Authority. An ESO aims to ensure that the child receives full time education and that he or she and the parents receive intensive support, advice and guidance from a Supervising Officer who is required "to advise, assist and befriend".

An application for an ESO will only be made when one or more of the following apply:

1. All other attempts to improve the pupil's attendance have failed and prosecution of the parents is deemed inappropriate.
2. The parents appear likely to co-operate with a structured programme of work prepared by the supervising officer.
3. There is support from Social Services for the ESO.

4. A Magistrates Court hearing has directed the Local Authority to apply for an ESO.
5. The EWO is of the opinion that the order will have a significant impact upon the pupil's non-attendance.

5.3 School Attendance Orders (SAO)

A EWO will serve a School Attendance Order (SAO) (under Sections 437-439 of the 1996 Education Act) on the parents of a child of compulsory school age if the parents have failed to demonstrate that the child is in receipt of suitable education and if the Local Authority believes that the child should attend school.

The SAO will specify the school which the child should attend. Should the parents fail to comply with the SAO the EWO will initiate legal proceedings under Section 443 of the 1996 Education Act, unless the parents can prove that the child is in receipt of suitable education.

All legal action taken by EWOs will be monitored and reviewed.

5.4 Parenting Orders

EWOs will, when necessary, liaise with the Youth Offending Service and with Social Care staff when the courts, in relation to a non-attendance case, impose or recommend a Parenting Order. A EWO will act as the responsible officer for such an order.

Section 6 Other EWO services

As well as undertaking casework with individual pupils EWOs will offer strategic support and challenge to schools by working with school management teams on policies and procedures. EWOs will promote improvements in schools' management of attendance through the strategies listed below.

6.1 Children Missing from Education (CME)

There are many reasons why children and young people 'fall out' of the education system and are at risk of 'going missing'. These range from failing to start in a new school or appropriate education provision to simply not re-registering at a new school when they move into the county. If you think a child and/or young person is missing from education (in whatever capacity), please inform the education department by making a [referral](#).

6.2 Child Employment Licences

The main provisions governing children's employment are contained in section 18 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. Local Authority bylaws made under the 1933 Act may place further restriction on the hours and conditions of work and the nature of employment permitted. Although these bylaws differ from authority to authority all must conform to the primary legislation and to the general principle that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance. The National Network for [Children in Employment & Entertainment \(NNCEE\)](#) provides further information as does p62 [All Wales Attendance Framework](#)

6.3 Attendance Audits

For examples of checklists and self-evaluation audit tools for attendance policies see:

Page 56 [All Wales attendance framework](#)

[Appendix 4](#) of Estyn's Attendance in secondary schools.

6.4 Parenting contracts

If a compulsory school age child who is a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly. It is the committing of that offence that can trigger the use of a Parenting Contract. The proof required that the offence has been committed is the same as that which would be required for a prosecution for the strict liability offence under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

6.5 Truancy Sweeps

EWOs work closely with the Police in order to ensure that Truancy Sweeps are carried out when necessary according to the agreed Police – Local Authority protocol. EWOs will liaise with local schools regarding Truancy Sweeps as and when necessary.

Appendix 1

Supporting Documents

Welsh Government guidance

[School attendance and absence | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES, guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)
<https://www.gov.wales/holidays-term-time-frequently-asked-questions>
<https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather>
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/all-wales-attendance-framework.pdf>
<https://www.gov.wales/framework-embedding-whole-school-approach-emotional-and-mental-wellbeing>
<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#curriculum-design-and-the-four-purposes>
<https://www.gov.wales/implementing-additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act-2018-practitioner-guide-0>
<https://acehubwales.com/resources/a-short-guide-to-understanding-adverse-childhood-experiences-and-a-trauma-and-ace-trace-informed-approach/>

Consultation Document

https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2023-06/consultation-document-belonging-engaging-and-participating-guidance_0.pdf

Swansea Council Guidance

[Education penalty notices - Swansea](#)
[Education Welfare Service - Swansea](#)
[Children missing from education \(CME\) - Swansea](#)
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/childemployment>
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/electivehomeeducation>
<https://www.gov.wales/home-education-handbook-home-educators>
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/9610/Tackling-Poverty-Strategy>
<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/aboutALNsupport>

Appendix 2

Embedded documents



Inclusion Strategy
2023-2028 (2).pdf



EWS Referral form
Eng Sept 22docx.docx

Appendix 3

School Attendance Policy information

Schools are encouraged to develop a whole school policy on attendance in discussion with staff, governors, parents and pupils taking account of Assembly Government guidance on Inclusion and Pupil Support and good practice identified by the local authority. As indicated on p13 [The All Wales Attendance Framework](#) This policy should:

1. give a high priority to attendance and punctuality.
2. ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.
3. ensure that clear information is regularly communicated to parents and pupils.
4. collect and make effective and constructive use of attendance data.
5. provide clear guidance to staff on the process of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence.
6. contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness.
7. recognise the importance of early intervention.
8. make provision for first-day of absence contact.
9. monitor post-registration truancy through the taking of class registers and spot checks.
10. be alert to critical times (e.g. Key Stage 2/3 transfer).
11. identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism / lateness.
12. provide for a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions.
13. develop attendance incentive schemes which recognise pupils' attendance achievements.
14. consider the setting of targets for individuals, classes, year groups, etc.
15. establish procedures for identifying and reintegrating long-term absentees.
16. provide for regular structured meetings between school staff and the EWO.
17. ensure that reasonable steps are taken by the school before an appropriate referral is made to the EWO.
18. stress to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time (schools should grant leave for term-time holidays sparingly).
19. use opportunities such as parents' evenings and the school prospectus / brochure to remind parents of the school policy on attendance.
20. involve governors.
21. identify a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance.
22. ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated.
23. be regularly monitored and reviewed.
24. take steps to create a culture which encourages attendance, addressing school based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, the curriculum, etc.

DRAFT

Agenda Item 7



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 13 July 2023

Managing and Improving School Exclusions including data

| | |
|--|--|
| Purpose: | To consider the progression of the strategies to reduce exclusions |
| Content: | An overview of the work undertaken to promote school inclusion |
| Councillors are Being asked to: | Consider the information provided and give views. |
| Legal Councillor: | Cabinet Member for Education and Learning |
| Lead Officer & Report Author: | Kate Phillips, Head of Vulnerable Service Kate.phillips2@swansea.gov.uk Helen Howells, Team Manager for Pupil Support Helen.howells@swansea.gov.uk |

1. Introduction

1.1 Swansea Council is committed to promoting inclusion in education, as evidenced in the 2022 Estyn inspection of education services in Swansea. Learner wellbeing and welfare is critical to supporting this commitment which can only be achieved if every child is included and has an opportunity to succeed.

1.2 This approach is reflected in both Swansea Council's corporate priorities of: Improving Education and Skills - so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life and specifically:

- We want all children and young people to attend school regularly, to be safe, to be resilient and to be healthy.
- We want to encourage and support vulnerable learners and their families to be engaged in learning.

- 1.3 Reducing exclusion is a key aim set out in the Vulnerable Learners Service Inclusion Strategy, approved by Cabinet in May, 2023. The local authority aims to ensure that children and young people are engaged in education that meets their needs. The inclusion team aims to provide early intervention through a number of successful strategies such as early identification for education other than at school (EOTAS) services, bespoke education arrangements, managed moves, and the monitoring of pastoral support plans (PSPs).
- 1.4 The local authority uses data to support prevention and intervention strategies. A mobility audit is produced annually which is split into separate analysis of fixed term exclusions, permanent exclusions, managed moves, and pastoral support plans (PSPs). It analyses data and provides context and is shared with all schools. Additionally, an exclusions analyser has been created and again shared with all schools. Three inclusion officers work with a number of schools to collate effective practice and share accordingly.

2. Data highlights

- 2.1 Fixed term exclusions have almost doubled since the 2018/2019 (academic year) pre pandemic period. However, exclusion rates are in line with national trends. In Swansea it is interesting to note, that a few schools have not followed this trend. A few schools have fixed term exclusion rates that were lower last year than any year in the past 5 years. In general, primary school exclusions remain lower than that of secondary schools. Additionally, officers provide regular training to senior leaders and governors on exclusion processes and seek to reduce exclusions by earlier referrals to pupil referral unit (PRU) provision.
- 2.2 Any exclusion is ultimately the decision of the headteacher, and we acknowledge that permanent exclusion is a very difficult decision issue; no headteacher takes the decision lightly, and always puts the best interests of all learners at the heart of the decision making.
- 2.3 The Inclusion team ensure swift and tailored provision to ensure that any child who has been permanently excluded is provided with the most appropriate education for their needs. In the last academic year 13 children were enrolled in different mainstream schools and the remainder were educated with EOTAS provision.

3. Interventions to promote inclusion

- 3.1 A managed move offers a pupil the opportunity to move to a new school and have a fresh start. The transfer to the new school is carefully planned and the pupil is fully supported during the process. The inclusion team coordinates every managed move between schools in Swansea,

providing support to all parties involved. No child who was offered a managed move in the last academic year was subsequently permanently excluded, and only 2% resulted in an application for EOTAS.

- 3.2 A PSP is a time limited school-based intervention that is designed to support children and young people who have not responded to a range of interventions and strategies put in place to combat disengagement. Our records show that 43 pupils in secondary schools were supported by a PSP, including 27 from mainstream schools and 16 learners from Maes Derw PRU. Only one child was referred to EOTAS following a PSP and no learners were given a permanent exclusion following a PSP. A majority achieved an eventual full-time school provision.
- 3.3 Officers work with our schools to be proactive in seeking support, and thus minimise exclusions. An education inclusion officer has been seconded to scope targeted external provision which promotes engagement and contributes to the wellbeing of the learner. Bespoke packages that are developed in a person-centred way are being trialled, through use of a PSP. We are in the process of updating our PSP guidance, to ensure all bespoke experiences are captured through one document.
- 3.4 Officers recently took part in pan Wales problem solving and effective practice sessions in relation to improving attendance and reducing exclusions. On a local level education officers attend multiagency and cross directorate strategic and operational groups to ensure links are made between issues in school and the community.
- 3.5 Most Swansea schools are now implementing a trauma informed environment which seeks to de-escalate through a variety of emotion coaching techniques. Through additional funding the Education Directorate has been able to secure 90 places for school-based practitioners to attend a level 3 trauma informed diploma. Trauma informed practice in schools aims to increase teachers, staff, and practitioners' awareness of how trauma can negatively impact individual children and the whole school community. This includes children and young people's ability to feel safe and develop trusting relationships with others. It is too early to understand outcomes however, initial feedback is very positive.
- 3.6 In serious cases where exclusions are issued, the Education Directorate will assist the headteacher in exploring all avenues for support and signposting to appropriate agencies, such as the Early Help Hub referral, Youth Justice Service prevention referral, as well as third sector agencies such as Media Academy and BAROD if needed. Furthermore, each incident is logged so that schools are able to build up a picture of need. Most schools use 'My Concern' as a recording mechanism. We are currently reviewing the effectiveness of this as a tool to oversee incidents from a school wide perspective.

- 3.7 The Education Directorate works in partnership across the council and other partners. It is the best approach to develop a holistic response to behaviour issues within school. We are engaged in a number of groups, strategies and interventions which include the work around; Community focussed schools, NEET prevention, the Cynnydd fund and transition to Shared Prosperity Funding and the strategies to increase engagement via these funds, our strategy to reduce Emotionally Based School Avoidance, our multi-agency working with CMET, Youth Justice Services and Early Help Hubs and our work developing Whole School Approaches to Emotional Health and Wellbeing. We are also involved with regional partnerships including the Western Bay Safeguarding Board and West Glamorgan Children and Young Peoples Programme Board.
- 3.8 We are currently leading a cross directorate group to embed process and policy to become an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) aware council. We are working with ACE HUB Cymru to gain accreditation.
- 3.9 The Education Directorate is committed to embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being through its EPHW forum and work with CAMHs in-reach and outreach services. This requires schools to develop a continuous process of reflection and improvement. By self-evaluating needs and strengths, schools can identify priority areas for action that specific interventions may help to address. The Education Directorate is embedding an emotional literacy (ELSA) intervention in schools, to support pupils identify their emotions which encourages less aggressive individual responses.
- 3.10 A language guide is being developed through the contextual missing exploited and trafficked (CMET) team's youth council in Swansea. Officers working with children and young people recognise language as a powerful tool, and when not used appropriately can be dehumanising and cause reactions. The language guide will be adapted and embedded across the directorate and with schools.
- 3.11 There remains a challenge in terms of securing impact and improvement as funding issues force implications on capacity of staffing. While our approaches focus on prevention and building capacity the importance of building positive relationship is significant and that requires more resource than we have available.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications within this report.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications within this report.

6. Equality & Engagement Implications

6.1 The report is for information and discussion.

Appendices:

None.

Agenda Item 8

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel DRAFT Work Programme 2023/2024

| Date | Items to be discussed | Who invited |
|---|--|---|
| Meeting 1 15 Jun 23 4.00pm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional Learning Needs Reform Annual Update (watching brief item) (Kate Phillips and Alison Lane) 2. New Curriculum for Wales Annual Update (watching brief item) (David Thomas) 3. Estyn Inspection – progress with recommendations (Sarah Hughes) 4. Key issues affecting education 2023/24 (Helen Morgan Rees) then discuss draft Work Programme for 2023/24 | Cabinet Member and Director Relevant officers |
| Meeting 2 13 Jul 23 4.00pm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Managing and Improving School Attendance including data 2. Managing and Improving School Exclusions including data (Kate Phillips and Helen Howells) | Cabinet Member and Director |
| Meeting 3 14 Sep 23 4.00pm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Looked after Children, support and progress in school (Kate Phillips and Helen Howells) 2. Following up on the 10 CDC recommendations (referred from Education Cabinet Development Committee) (Sarah Hughes) 3. Feedback from Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group | Cabinet Member and Director Panel Convener |
| Meeting 4 19 Oct 23 4.00pm | Schools Session and Visit 1 – Gorseinon Primary School School Development Plan | |
| Meeting 5 23 Nov 23 4.00pm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing disadvantage in Schools, including pupil development grant, roll out of free school meals, cost of the school day and school uniform (Kelly Small) 2. School Improvement Service Annual Update (David Thomas) 3. Cookery in Schools (Rhodri Jones) 4. Feedback from Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group | Cabinet Member and Director Panel Convener |
| Meeting 6 14 Dec 23 4.30pm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual Education Performance against identified priorities (RAG) including Estyn Inspection recommendations progress update (Sarah Hughes) 2. Cabinet Member Q&A | Cabinet Member and Director |
| Meeting 7 18 Jan 24 4.30pm | Introducing the New Curriculum for Wales – a meeting with a Secondary School and its Cluster Primaries – cluster tba? | Cabinet Member and Director |
| Meeting 8 TBA - Feb | Annual Council Budget as it relates to education matters | Cabinet Member and Director |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Meeting 9 14 Mar 24 4.00pm | Schools Session and Visit 2 – Bishopston Comprehensive School School Development Plan | |
| Meeting 10 18 Apr 24 4.00pm | 1. Hearing the Voices of Children and Young People (Rhodri Jones) 2. Education Other Than At School services (EOTAS) Annual Update (Kate Phillips) | Cabinet Member and Director |
| Meeting 11 9 May 24 4.00pm | 1. Quality in Education (QEd) / Sustainable Communities for Learning Update (Louise Herbert-Evans) 2. Swansea Skills Partnership Annual Update (David Bawden) 3. End of year review in Education Scrutiny | Cabinet Member and Director |

To be added when we have more information from Welsh Government: Performance in Swansea Schools – Swansea Education Directorate/Cabinet Member and Partneriaeth (Annual) - Partneriaeth Legal Agreement says ‘Each Council’s scrutiny committee for children’s and education services will meet at least once a year to consider performance and progress in their schools such meetings to be attended by Council and PARTNERIAETH staff equipped to answer questions’.

The Panel will also receive relevant individual school Estyn reports as they are published, along with any other reports or information relevant to Education Scrutiny.

Background

Cllr Robert Smith, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
Helen Morgan Rees, Director of Education

The Officers listed in above timetable and their roles:

Sarah Hughes (Head of Education Strategy)
Rhodri Jones (Head of Achievement and Partnership Service)
Kate Phillips (Head of Vulnerable Learners)
Alison Lane (Head of Additional Learning Needs Team)
Kelly Small (Head of Planning and Resources Team)
David Thomas (Principal School Improvement Officer)
Karin Jenkins (Head of Swansea Music)
Amanda Taylor (Head of PRU and BSU)
Jennifer Harding-Richards (Religion, Values and Ethics Adviser)
Louise Herbert-Evans (Team Manager Capital)
Lisa Collins (Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer – Vulnerable Learners)
Helen Howells (Team Manager Pupil Support – Vulnerable Learners)