

EDUCATION, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JUNE 2023

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LEVELS

Purpose:

To respond to Scrutiny Committee's request for an update on attendance.

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the following issues:

- The current situation in relation to attendance across schools
- A clear understanding of how the Local Authority is supporting school attendance.

Reasons:

The report provides information regarding the levels of attendance across Carmarthenshire schools since 2012. The main reasons cited for pupil absence have been included within the report.

Schools across Wales have struggled to re-engage learners and families following the lengthy periods of isolation brought about by the pandemic. In addition, many of the learners returning to full time education have found it difficult to resume the routine and expectations of school life. This situation has once again prevented meaningful comparison with the data from years prior to the COVID pandemic for Carmarthenshire, but it does provide an initial opportunity to provide some insight into its legacy.

Attendance across Carmarthenshire schools remains lower than pre-pandemic levels, with illness accounting for the majority of absences.

To be referred to the Cabinet / Council for decision: No

Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder: Councillor Glynog Davies (Education and Welsh Language)

Directorate: Education and Children Services

Name of Head of Service:
Aneirin Thomas

Report Authors:
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Designations:

Head of Education Services and Inclusion

Attendance

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
EDUCATION & CHILDREN SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
23RD JUNE 2023

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LEVELS

The report provides information with regard to the levels of attendance across Carmarthenshire schools for this academic year.

HOW ARE WE SUPPORTING SCHOOLS AND PROMOTING GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?

We are part of a local authority strategy to support schools.

Our work links to Strategic focus groups for Inclusion and Engagement and SFG for Safeguarding.

We cover:

- School safeguarding
- Attendance
- Children Missing from Education- CME
- Elective Home Education- EHE
- Child licensing

ADVISORY WORK - completed by social workers for schools / senior staff

- **At a Welsh Government level-** Contribution by senior staff/ team manager to all Wales groups- EHE, attendance, CME and licencing. Data returns completed as required. Manager has been member of selected task and finish group with WG to write new attendance guidance.
- **Local Authority- strategic level**
- Attendance by team manager at case management meetings (education), member of Strategic Focus Groups – safeguarding, inclusion and engagement, audit and evaluation, CLOG, DMT, provision of training to senior managers, and key LA teams, including school admissions, development of CME Policy and toolkit, model attendance policy, education neglect policy, Flexi-learning toolkit and attendance self-evaluation toolkits for schools.
- **School level- whole team support for attendance**
- Team manager has provided attendance training to schools, governors, and developed a Supporting Schools handbook with comprehensive resources, which outlined a 5 step model for responding to pupil absence.
- Social workers provide advice, share resources and support for schools around promoting good attendance, addressing pupil absence, child welfare, safeguarding, CME, EHE.
- Social workers support schools to proactively identify pupils/ families for early intervention via advisory visits.

- Whole team assist schools to find positive solutions to pupil absence/ support needs in the early stages.
- Social workers supported schools with 140 advisory meetings/ pre-referral meetings last academic year.
- The team support schools by attending TAPPAS (Team Around the Pupil Parent and Setting) meetings.
- Team manager reviews completed attendance self-evaluations from schools and provides follow up support where needed.
- Team manager has worked with education psychology to develop Emotionally Based School Avoidance EBSA resources which have been shared with schools.
- Social workers provide a duty system within the team. This ensures all referrals and queries are dealt with promptly and responded to. The duty worker ensures Operation Encompass and Endeavour notifications are shared with school safeguarding leads in a timely way. Feedback indicates that the duty system is valued by schools. Over last 12 months we have had 3299 Operation encompass notifications and 357 Operation endeavour notifications.

OPERATIONAL WORK- how do we support children referred to the team and their families?

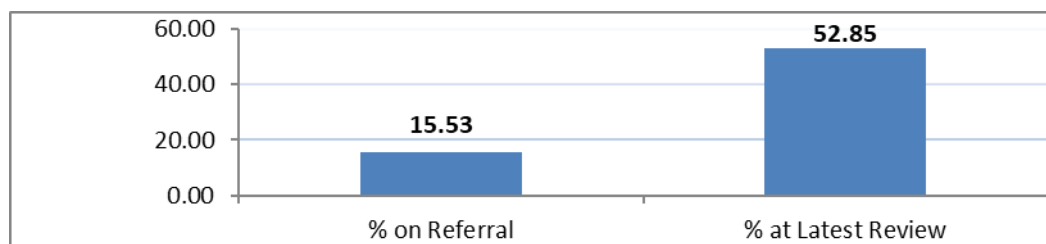
- This year 446 referrals from schools were received up to 22-5-23. Last year for same period we had 413.
- CME referrals spiked last year with 127 referrals – it remains high this year with 87 referrals- this includes work with Ukrainian children/ refugees.

We work to:

- achieve improved attendance of children referred to the team, promote good attendance through a family engagement/ social work model of intervention with case work.
- identify and engage children missing from education.
- support the Local Authority in promoting positive engagement between families and schools.
- Plan, deliver and review bespoke packages of direct intervention with families and pupils who are referred to the team.
- provide a valuable interface between schools, education staff and Children's Services/ safeguarding.
- contribute to the wider, multiagency, provision of early intervention and support.
- Where appropriate pursue the resumption of satisfactory school attendance through the Magistrates or Family Court/ FPN

IMPACT OF OUR WORK – what difference are we making?

Average % Attendance at Referral and Review



Following all referrals, 94.62% of families are contacted within the recommended 3 working days.

During the first 2 terms, 362 referrals were received, and 218 cases closed.

Data for first 2 terms (2022/23) shows attendance has improved in 81% cases referred.

Of the 87 CME referrals, only 5 children have yet to engage in education and support is in place for them to do this.

Prosecutions are used as a last resort and numbers of prosecutions are listed below for current and previous academic years:

2018/19	22
2019/20	7
2020/21	4
2021/22	6
2022/23	8

NEXT STEPS

- Develop LA attendance strategy – with clear responsibilities for schools and the LA.
- Development of publicity resources – raising awareness of good attendance.
- Develop consistency of practice across schools.
- Annual attendance training to be held to share best practice.
- Embed the attendance self-evaluation toolkit for schools.
- Formalise challenge and scrutiny to schools where needed- universal/ targeted/ enhanced support.
- Complete local authority CME self-evaluation
- Embed policy for reduced timetables, CME policy and flexi guidance.

- Implement emerging attendance guidance from Welsh Government and EHE guidance.
- Continue to utilise and build on an engagement model of intervention.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED ?

Yes

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Aneirin Thomas

Head of Education and Inclusion

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER(S) AWARE/CONSULTED

Yes

Include any observations here

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

There are None.