

Cefnogaeth Presenoldeb i Ysgolion **Attendance Support for Schools**



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Cyngor Sir Gâr
Carmarthenshire
County Council



Department for Education and Children's Services

Supporting Schools to Improve Pupil Attendance – Strategic Overview

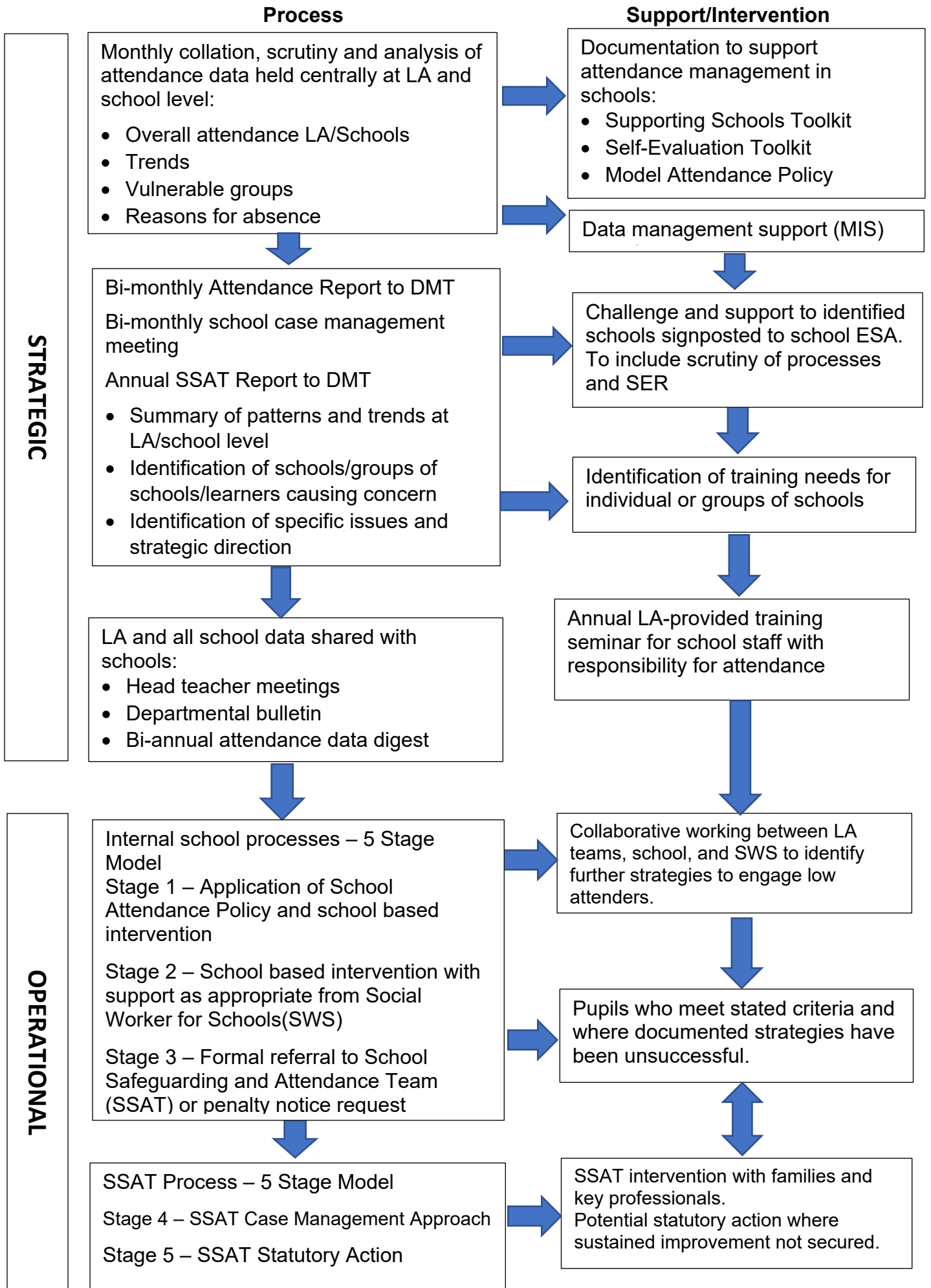
Schools are directly responsible for managing and improving attendance within their individual contexts but the LA provides a range of support and challenge strategies to assist them in this.

School has the following responsibilities:

- Meet all requirements of the All Wales Attendance Framework and policies developed by the Local Authority.
- Use electronic registration systems at morning and afternoon sessions.
- Keep all pupil information up to date on their relevant MIS and only use the appropriate WG attendance codes.
- Operate a 'first day contact' system and ensure that the school makes every effort to maintain close contact with any pupils unable to attend.
- Take reasonable measures to secure improved attendance and engagement in education prior to contacting the School Safeguarding and Attendance Team.
- Follow statutory guidance in relation to deregistering pupils from school roll.
- Strategically analyse attendance data by a range of criteria, including year group/class, gender, vulnerable groups.
- Target support for attendance to areas of identified need within the school.
- Have and adhere to an Attendance Policy which is in line with LA and All Wales guidance.
- Utilise Team Around the Family (TAF) approaches to solving problems for families that may impact on attendance.

The Local Authority supports schools in improving and maintaining good attendance the following ways:

- Provide a consistent, corporate, and strategic approach to supporting all schools in raising and maintaining good attendance.
- Monitoring school attendance data, providing advice around pupils at risk of disengagement and challenging schools as and when required.
- Providing toolkits for schools to support maintaining good attendance.
- Provide a centralised service of support and advice on attendance and data monitoring to schools, parents and pupils via the School Safeguarding and Attendance team (SSAT).
- Provide a suite of template documents such as policies, legally approved letters.
- Offer a “refer in” service for pupils where the main cause of absence is unauthorised and where the criteria for referral are met.
- Ensure policies and procedures are in place for securing regular attendance, attendance monitoring, children missing from education, child employment, chaperone licensing and child performance licensing and elective home education.
- Provide schools with appropriate and timely information, advice, and support in line with the evolving Welsh Government attendance guidance and All Wales Attendance Framework.
- Support schools to ensure the regular attendance of vulnerable groups of pupils including those children who are: ‘Looked After’ by the Authority, at risk of exclusion, have ALN, have disengaged from school, Asylum Seekers, and travellers.
- Support Schools in some specific circumstances, as outlined in the existing WG guidance, to secure regular school attendance through School Attendance Orders, Education Supervision Orders, Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Prosecution.

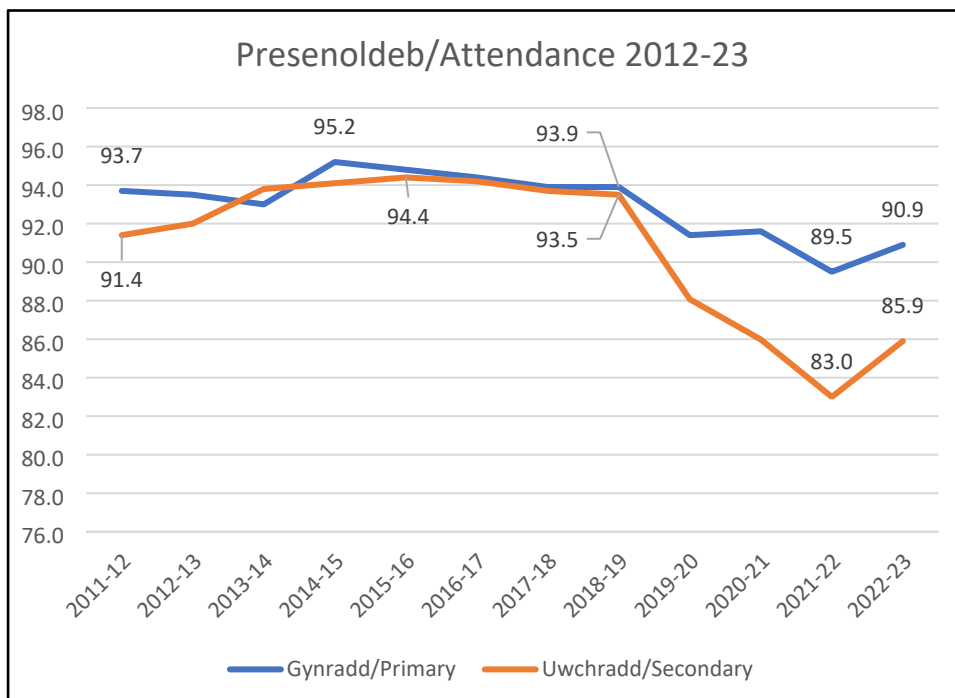


Current Data:

Carmarthenshire Schools Attendance Data 2012-23

Year	Primary			Secondary		
	Total	A	U/A	Total	A	U/A
2011-12	93.7	5.9	0.4	91.4	8.0	0.6
2012-13	93.5	6.1	0.4	92.0	7.6	0.4
2013-14	93.0	4.3	0.8	93.8	5.6	0.5
2014-15	95.2	4.0	0.9	94.1	5.1	0.8
2015-16	94.8	4.4	0.9	94.4	4.9	0.7
2016-17	94.4	4.8	0.8	94.2	4.8	0.9
2017-18	93.9	5.1	1.0	93.7	4.9	1.4
2018-19	93.9	5.0	1.2	93.5	5.0	1.5
2019-20	91.4	7.1	1.5	88.1	7.6	2.4
2020-21	91.6	7.0	1.4	86.0	10.1	3.8
2021-22	89.5	8.9	1.6	83.0	11.2	4.8
2022-23	90.9	7.6	1.5	85.9	9.1	4.3

	2011-19 Official published WG data
	2019-23 Unverified Teacher Centre data



Attendance at the time of the last LA inspection in 2011-12 was 93.7% in primary schools and 91.4% in secondary schools. Although there was a very slight fall in primary schools in the following two years, there was an improvement which peaked at 95.2% in 2014-15, following which the figure slightly declined in subsequent years to 2018-19 which was the last year of official data reporting to Welsh Government before the covid pandemic. The

figure for 2018-19 was very slightly above the figure for 2011-12 at the time of the last inspection.

In secondary schools, there was a sustained improvement from 2011-12 which peaked at 94.4% in 2015-16, following which the figure plateaued. However, the figure of 93.5% in 2018-19 and just before the pandemic was 2.1 percentage points higher than in 2011-12.

As in all local authorities across Wales, the covid pandemic has had a significant impact on school attendance with the fall most pronounced in the secondary sector. In the first full year of recovery to normal school operations in 2021-22 the figure was 89.5% in primary schools and 83.0% in secondary although formal reporting to Welsh Government has not yet resumed. In the current academic year, there has been a steady recovery in school attendance but the level is still significantly below the pre-covid figure. It is recognised that much has to be done to improve school attendance levels and this remains a key target for the Authority.

Prior to the pandemic, school attendance and exclusion comparative data had been published by Welsh Government (WG) retrospectively on an annual basis. During the pandemic, data publication and performance measurement was suspended and has not fully resumed.

The data presented below is using unverified Carmarthenshire County Council data from existing local sources.

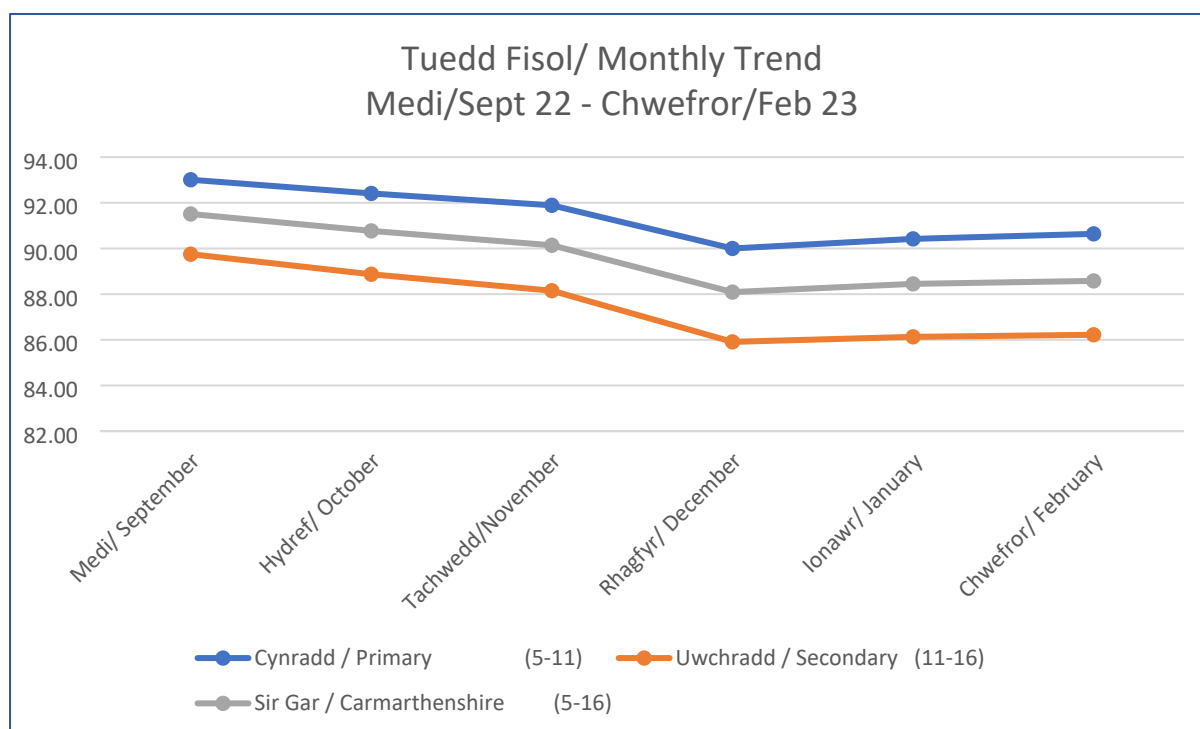
School Attendance 2022-23 Academic Year (Half year)

**Tabl/Table 1: Crynodeb o Presenoldeb Chwefror 2023
Summary Attendance February 2023**

	2021-2022	Chwefror / February 2023		
		Awd Auth	Anawd Unauth	Presenoldeb Attendance
Cynradd Primary (5-11)	89.49	7.95	1.39	90.64
Uwchradd Secondary (11-16)	83.01	9.31	4.13	86.22
Sir Gar Carmarthenshire (5-16)	86.57	8.58	1.38	88.58

Tabl/Table 2: 2022-23 Tuedd fisol
2022-23 Monthly trend

	Medi September	Hydref October	Tachwedd November	Rhagfyr December	Ionawr January	Chwefror February
Cynradd Primary (5-11)	93.01	92.41	91.89	90.00	90.42	90.64
Uwchradd Secondary (11-16)	89.75	88.87	88.15	85.91	86.13	86.22
Sir Gar Carmarthenshire (5-16)	91.51	90.77	90.14	88.09	88.45	88.58



Primary attendance data, whilst below pre-pandemic levels is showing an improvement on the previous year at 90.6% indicating some signs of recovery. Attendance in secondary schools also reduced to below 90% during the pandemic and this situation remained unchanged for 21/22 with overall attendance sitting at 83.0% for the year. However, the recovery in secondary schools during the current academic year has been slightly stronger than in primary schools, albeit from a lower base.

There remains inconsistency between schools in both sectors in terms of the rate of improvement during the current year and it is hoped that a more strategic approach to challenge and support, supported by a more robust use of county level and individual school data and ongoing training for key staff in schools will enable continuous improvement in the coming year.

Headteachers have the discretion as to whether to authorise a child's absence or not based on the information provided by the parent/carer. The high levels of authorised absence

outlined in Table 1 suggest that parents/carers were continuing in the main, to provide schools with acceptable reasons for absence, although this is slightly less the case in secondary schools where unauthorised absence remains at a higher level than in primary schools.

Analysis of data shows that illness remained the predominant reason for absence across the year in both sectors with this significantly surpassing all other reasons. The COVID absence code remained available for schools to use until August 2022 and the use of this reflects the continued impact of the COVID virus on school communities during 2021/22. Holiday absences increased significantly in the primary sector for 21/22 as travel restrictions eased. Once again this reflects the significant impact of the COVID-19 lockdown with many families keen to resume holiday bookings after the lockdown ceased. This trend has continued in the current year and there have been 10,800 pupil days (0.3%) lost through unauthorised holidays to June 14th 2023.

Table 3
Attendance Vulnerable Groups Half Year to September 1st 2022 to February Half-Term 2023

	Boys	Girls	Diff	FSM	Non-FSM	Diff	ALN	Non-ALN	Diff
Primary 5-11	90.5	90.8	-0.3	86.5	92.1	-5.6	87.8	91.5	-3.7
Secondary 11-16	86.6	85.8	0.8	78.8	88.6	-9.9	81.7	88.1	-6.4
All 5-16	88.6	88.5	0.2	83.1	90.5	-7.4	84.7	90.0	-5.3

Parents/carers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. Headteachers understand the importance of attendance on pupil engagement and attainment and implement a range of strategies to promote and secure attendance in collaboration with Council Services. The challenges of recent years have resulted in many schools developing a range of alternative offers to re-engage those who are struggling to attend. A strategic priority for the department in the coming year is to facilitate training where schools with successful practice can share this across all schools.

The department has shared key documentation with schools to support a consistent approach to improving attendance. The most important of these are:

- Model Attendance Policy template
- Improving Attendance Self-Evaluation Toolkit
- Supporting Schools Toolkit – contains guidance on all aspects of managing attendance, including all legally approved template letters

The School Safeguarding and Attendance Team plays a key role in supporting schools at an operational level to improve attendance levels. (See separate report)