

Children, Young People and Education Committee
Request for information on Pupil attendance & training for school governors
Response from: Denbighshire County Council

Pupil Attendance

- *information about how you are you working with schools to monitor and improve the attendance of pupils who have not returned to school since the two periods of general school closures, have done so on a very limited basis, or have been regularly/persistently absent; and*
- *any data you hold on the numbers and absence rates of these pupils?*

Position Statement

Denbighshire County Council has worked closely to support the needs of families and has encouraged parents to work with schools, education and the local authority services to access education . This includes the periods of remote learning through the pandemic where regular contact from pastoral staff in schools and education services took place with additional close monitoring of families in particular need.

There has been a significant change in the autumn term September 2021 with a wide range of reasons reported why families are not engaging with the learning of their child in school that relates to the impact of the pandemic . The majority of referrals sent by schools to the Education Welfare Service have details of children displaying mental health needs, high levels of social anxiety and acute mental health need. Many of these children are accessing health services such as CAMHS , GP or Neuro – developmental services.

Following an audit of the referrals in the last six weeks to the EWO service, all cases have some correlation and patterns of health concerns being evidenced from schools. All cases referred by schools are allocated weekly and immediate contact is made with families and the schools to develop an attendance support plan and reintegration back to school where possible.

Regular meetings with schools are undertaken to develop these plans of support with weekly tracking of pupils progress re-engaging with their learning takes place . Where evidence is not clear further discussions with schools ,other support services and legal services take place. Where entrenched attendance concerns are clear but not supported by genuine concerns, steps are actioned with the appropriate order. Fixed Penalty Notices are not currently used as these have been withdrawn in the current Welsh Government guidance.

Many parents are raising that social needs and anxiety of pupils is at a high level and as a result cases are identified as not accessing school regularly due to this. Most parents however do deem school important but this is sometimes mitigated against the well-being of their child's mental health. Access to routine mental health appointments are currently 11 weeks before first the appointment. The increase in infection by the OMICRON virus has also heightened these concerns in the last month.

The current levels of unauthorised absence in the Primary and Secondary sector is outlined below :

Overall The Secondary Schools total for the year Sept – Dec 2021 86.6% with an average 3.7 % absence rate across the high schools.

Sept-Nov attendance report from SIMS data .The O code column shows the number of times that the code has appeared (one school day = two entries), followed by the equivalent number of days lost to unauthorised absence. Data relates to the period 1st September and 17th December.

	O codes	Equivalent days
Primary	13,044	6,522
Secondary	23,081	11,540.5

Training for School Governors

Please can you provide us with information about the support you provide to school governors, including how you are encouraging school governors to take up Estyn's lay inspector training programme?

Mandatory Governor training is supported by the local authority and is available to every governor. All Denbighshire schools are also supported to access the guidance provided by Governors Cymru. Governors Cymru provide a wealth of information and resources and schools are encouraged to use this service regularly. Schools also have access to the Governor Audit Toolkit that identifies strengths and areas for further development. Termly meetings of the Denbighshire Governors Association are held and information shared as appropriate. Information received from Estyn regarding training opportunities are forwarded although schools already receive them on the Estyn mailing list themselves. We actively encourage all governors to undertake training offers and offer various internally arranged training events as required. We have provided bespoke training when required and work closely with our schools to meet their needs.