

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

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Chair of the Children, Young People
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Sent via email

20th January 2022

Dear Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee,

Re: Pupil attendance and training for school governors

Thank you for your letter of 17th December 2022.

We are able to provide the following information in response to your request for:

- information about how Newport City Council is 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 the local authority holds on the numbers and absence rates of these pupils;
- information about the support Newport City Council provides to school governors, including encouraging school governors to take up Estyn's lay inspector training programme.

Pupil attendance

Rates of pupil attendance are monitored on an ongoing basis by schools and the Education Welfare Service with weekly and monthly attendance reports being reviewed.

It is essential that pupils maintain the habit of attending school regularly and punctually. The local authority expects schools to engage pupils who are not attending on a regular basis and establish contact with their families. It is recognised that parents may still need additional reassurances that schools are safe places for their children to attend. Where schools are unsuccessful engaging parents, or where continued absences are unauthorised, schools may refer the pupil and their family to the Education Welfare Service for follow up.

Whilst there is no expectation on schools to set attendance targets or report attendance data for national purposes, schools still keep an accurate record of pupil attendance for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Schools have been asked to set their own internal targets for attendance and share these with the Education Welfare Service to help direct the work of Education Welfare Officers. Monthly attendance data for each school is collected, analysed and tracked against the previous academic year. This data is then circulated to all schools on a monthly basis.

The Education Welfare Service consists of an Education Welfare Service Manager who is currently supported by a Senior Education Welfare Officer and the equivalent of 4 Education Welfare Officers. A named Education Welfare Officer is allocated to each school.

The frequency of meetings with school attendance leads is agreed with the school using prior attendance data, their support needs and the school's internal attendance target as the basis for this. Discussions with school attendance leads focus on individual learner absences and the circumstances related to this including how the school has followed this up; strategies implemented to date (reintegration timetables, key support staff, etc.), the support being provided to the family; any medical advice or feedback from CAMHS.

The local authority holds data on the rates of persistent absence from school for the period 1st September 2021 to 30th November 2021.

Pupils With Attendance 80% or Less - 1st September to 30th November 2021				
		Male	Female	All
Primary	Number of pupils	593	583	1,176
	% of cohort	9.67%	10.03%	9.85%
Secondary	Number of pupils	742	786	1,528
	% of cohort	15.31%	16.68%	15.99%

Pupils With Attendance 50% or Less - 1st September to 30th November 2021				
		Male	Female	All
Primary	Number of pupils	38	38	76
	% of cohort	0.6%	0.7%	0.6
Secondary	Number of pupils	115	124	239
	% of cohort	2.4%	2.6%	2.5

Pupils With Attendance 20% or Less - 1st September to 30th November 2021				
		Male	Female	All
Primary	Number of pupils	6	4	10
	% of cohort	0.10%	0.07%	0.08%
Secondary	Number of pupils	30	39	69
	% of cohort	0.62%	0.83%	0.72%

To exemplify how the Education Welfare Service provides direct support to schools, pupils and families, activity data from November 2021 is also available. During this period, Education Welfare Officers attended 75 school meetings and received 93 referrals in relation to the persistent absence of individual pupils. Each attendance referral is followed up either by phone or email contact with a parent or by a home visit.

In November 2021, Education Welfare Officers completed 189 home visits. In 109 of these, Education Welfare Officers engaged with parents and pupils to discuss the reasons for non-attendance. The main reasons given for persistent absence this academic year to date were: Covid-19 positive cases; Covid-19 self-isolation; Covid-19 anxiety; other illnesses; mental health issues related to the child or their family; or family holiday during term time. Education Welfare Officers provided reassurances about the Covid secure practices being used in schools and also provided advice, guidance, advocacy and signposting to other services.

Where a home visit is made and there is no reply from the child or the family, a calling card is left and a follow up visit carried out. Many parents make contact with the Education Welfare Officer on first receipt of a calling card.

A local authority media attendance campaign is ready for introduction when the number of cases of Covid-19 begins to reduce. Campaign materials include social media posts, posters, publicity resources and banners for display in schools.

In addition to their work with schools, Education Welfare Officers provide support to families who home educate their children. As of 1st November 2021, 184 children were known to be home educated in Newport. The Senior Education Welfare Officer leads on the work to ensure that home educating families are supported and that a programme of regular visits to home educating families is in place.

Welsh Government grant funding has been used to introduce a Family Liaison Officer for Home Educating families who has provided extra capacity for this work.

Training for School Governors

Governor Support Services are provided via the Education Achievement Service (EAS) for all local authorities and schools across the South East Wales region with the aim of ensuring that the organisation and management of governing bodies is effective and meets both statutory requirements and national priorities. These services include:

- Professional Clerking Services (through SLAs with individual Governing Bodies);
- Statutory Committee and Specialist Governance Support, and;
- The EAS Excellence in Governance Framework;
- Access to an ongoing and regular programme of training and development which includes curriculum, evaluation, safeguarding, attendance, exclusion and ALN workshops.

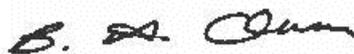
The Local Authority provides information to governors in a range of ways, including:

- Chief Education Officer Annual Briefings e.g. Safeguarding, EdTech, Cyber Resilience, Inclusion Funding and HR.
- School Budget Forum – Terms of Reference include governor representation and minutes shared with all governors.
- School Finance Training – bespoke training for individual schools and general governor training.
- School Development Plan (SDP) Professional Discussions, Team Around the School, Multi-Agency Meetings – including the Chair of Governors
- Provision of local authority developed policies which the governing body can adopt for use by the school. For example, Attendance, Information Security, Management of Staff Absence, Pay and School Admissions

As part of National Categorisation, Governors were provided with a summary report which included performance data. Delivery was differentiated according to support category. Given the cessation of National Categorisation and the collection of performance data, this can no longer be provided.

In relation to the Lay Inspector role, providing information for Governors from Estyn is completed in partnership with the EAS. Any request to share useful information or opportunities with governors about this role, would be promoted through the [EAS Supporting our schools Site - School Governance](#) and where relevant, an email to governors would also be issued. Similarly, where the EAS Governor Support Service had any enquiry from a Governor about the programme, they would direct them to the Estyn page on the Lay Inspector role.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Beverly Owen
Chief Executive