

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



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Dyddiad/Date: 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2022

Ms Jayne Bryant,  
Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee,  
Welsh Parliament,  
Cardiff Bay,  
CARDIFF.  
CF99 1SN

Dear Ms Bryant,

**Pupil Attendance and Training for Governors**

Thank you for your letter of 17<sup>th</sup> December asking for information regarding:

- Information about how you are not working with schools to monitor and improve the attendance of pupils who have not returned to school since the two periods of general school closes, 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?
- Training for school governors

Please see attached response to the questions above.

Yours sincerely

**Melanie Godfrey**  
**Director of Education and Lifelong Learning/**  
**Cyfarwyddwr Addysg a Dysgu Gydol Oes**

**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**  
Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog.  
Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un  
sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU**

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.



**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?**

Cardiff LA delegates funding to High Schools to employ their own School Attendance Officers who are responsible for working both in the high school and with their cluster primaries to work with families to address attendance and well-being issues. We have a 5-step framework and approach to attendance, where schools and School Attendance Officers are responsible for early intervention to address attendance concerns at steps 1 and 2. If there is no improvement, then cases are escalated for Education Welfare Service involvement and potential statutory action (steps 3 to 5).

Following a return to school after the first lockdown, the Education Welfare Service undertook attendance reviews in every school to ensure that attendance concerns had been effectively followed up as well as provide advice to schools and School Attendance Officers regarding appropriate interventions and identify any further support that may be needed to enable a full return to the school.

This exercise was repeated in secondary schools in April 21 with further reviews commencing again in November 2021. These are undertaken to ensure that EWS advice has been followed and that where pupils have not returned or made a poor return that these pupils are being appropriately referred to the EWS. Reviews have been completed in all 18 secondary schools and are currently underway in our 96 primary schools.

The initial reviews in January 2021 focused on pupils who had not returned and those with under 25% attendance. The current round of reviews is interrogating registers to identify those with below 50% attendance.

In January 2021 during the first review, there were 307 secondary pupils and 189 primary pupils who had not return or had made a poor return and had under 25% attendance. During the subsequent review in April, the figure had reduced to 155 secondary pupils. A primary review was not undertaken in April 2021.

The November 2021 review identified 729 secondary pupils with under 50% attendance with year 11's accounting for 223 of this number. Further advice regarding suggested interventions, support available from other agencies to address specific concerns as well as referral into EWS was given in feedback to schools. Primary reviews have not yet been completed.

The reviews have highlighted a significant number of pupils where anxiety has been identified as a barrier to attending. The Education Psychology Service has produced a guidance document and toolkit on Anxiety Based School Avoidance (ABSA) to support schools and parents in talking to children and young people regarding their anxiety and to provide strategies to improve attendance which has a useful resource for schools.

Welsh Government's decision not to reinstate FPN's deeming them inappropriate under current circumstances has been disappointing to many schools as they feel that these would potentially be a useful tool in certain circumstances in helping to re-focus families and re-establish a return to good attendance patterns.

In addition to the reviews which are very time and labour intensive we are working closely with data colleagues in Children's Services to match the attendance data against children and young people open to Children's Services. This is so that we can monitor and scrutinise this data between reviews and identify any attendance concerns are followed up in a timely way to ensure that children do not fall from view. We are working towards extending the categories of pupils that we will report against including those who have been recently closed to Children's Services and then potentially those pupils referred to Children's Services but who did not meet the threshold for involvement.

We heard from Estyn about the support they provide to school governors, including their lay inspector programme, which enables school governors to train as lay inspectors to gain insight into how Estyn carries out its evaluations of schools.

**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.**

Cardiff Council recognises the key role of school governing bodies in driving excellence in Cardiff's schools and is committed to providing high quality support and training for its governors. The importance of high quality governance is a key focus for Cardiff 2030 and there is a commitment to strengthen school governance across the city.

The Council's Governor Services team works with schools in securing highly effective governance through the provision of advice, guidance, training, support and challenge to school governors.

The team provides reliable, prompt and relevant advice and guidance on all aspects of school governance, supporting chairs of governors, governors and clerks in their roles and enabling them to comply with the law. The service also works closely with the Central South Consortium on school improvement strategies, monitoring progress and in developing training and development opportunities for governors. A full training programme is available on all aspects of the governor's role and consists of on-line training, briefing sessions and events.

The Education Directorate encouraged school governors to take up the lay inspector training programme when Estyn was seeking new nominations. Opportunities were shared widely and also raised with Cardiff Governors Association (an independent organisation led by and managed by Cardiff Governors) who are a key partner of the Education Directorate.