

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO CABINET

19 FEBRUARY 2019

### REPORT BY THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

#### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA

#### 1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- share with Cabinet school attendance data over the academic years 2015-2016 to 2017-2018; and
- seek agreement of a proposed amendment to the local authority's School Attendance Strategy (2018-2021) which was previously approved by Cabinet on 15 May 2018.

#### 2. Connection to corporate improvement objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1 The report links to the following improvement priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- **Supporting a successful economy** - we will take steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
- **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – we will take early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

#### 3. Background

3.1 There is a clear link between high levels of attendance and good educational attainment. Poor attendance and late arrival at school can have a detrimental effect on a child's learning and can impact on their wellbeing. Individual school's attendance data and overall local authority attendance data is provided to inform members of the trends over the past three academic years.

3.2 School attendance remains a priority. The local authority supports school attendance via an integrated locality model of working. There are 5.5 full-time equivalent education welfare officers (EWOs) split between the three early help locality hubs. The EWOs work alongside a range of family intervention workers (eg family engagement officers, family support workers, lead workers, school-based counsellors and Inclusion Service

colleagues). It is worth noting that the three early help locality hubs are co-located with their respective safeguarding teams. This model of working allows for a more joined up and intelligence-led approach in supporting pupils who have poor attendance.

- 3.3 The local authority's attendance strategy now incorporates recent Welsh Government guidance on schools' rewards systems. This guidance reinforces the importance of schools considering the provisions of the Equality Act 2010. In particular, schools are required to ensure they do not disadvantage pupils whose attendance is negatively impacted due to a disability or a diagnosed medical condition.

#### 4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Comparative primary school attendance data for the period 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 is outlined in the following table:

Primary	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Bridgend	95.3%	95.2%	94.9%
Central South Consortium	94.9%	94.9%	94.6%
Wales	94.9%	94.9%	94.6%

- 4.2 In Bridgend in 2017-2018, average attendance at primary schools was reported at 94.9%
- 4.3 While attendance rates have fallen from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018, reductions have been relatively small, but performance remains 0.3% above the all-Wales average.
- 4.4 For the autumn term of 2018-2019, attendance at primary schools was recorded at 95.1%, compared to 95.2% for the same period in 2017-2018.
- 4.5 While attendance at primary schools reduced in 2017-2018 by 0.3% from the previous year, this still compares favourably to both the all-Wales average and the Central South Consortium (CSC) average which were reported at 94.6% for the same period.
- 4.6 Of the 48 primary schools in Bridgend, 27 reported attendance in 2017-2018 at or above the all-Wales average of 94.6%. Attendance in the 27 schools ranged from 94.6% to 98.4%
- 4.7 **Free school meals**
- 4.8 The percentage of Bridgend pupils of compulsory school age eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 18.0%, higher than the national rate of 17.4%. This level of eligibility is the 9th highest in Wales, out of the 22 local authorities (PLASC 2018). Nine of the 88 areas in Bridgend are now in the 10% most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD 2014).
- 4.9 Percentage attendance of compulsory school age children attending maintained primary schools and eligible for FSM compared to those pupils who are not eligible for FSM is outlined in the table below:

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Bridgend %</b>			<b>Wales %</b>		
Academic year	Non FSM	FSM	Difference	Non FSM	FSM	Difference
2015-2016	95.8	93.6	2.2	95.5	92.7	2.8
2016-2017	95.6	93.3	2.3	95.4	92.7	2.7
2017-2018	95.3	92.9	2.4	95.1	92.1	3.0

- 4.10 Attendance at primary schools for those pupils entitled to FSM was reported at 92.9% for 2017-2018. Although this figure has fallen by 0.4% since 2016-2017 it remains above the all-Wales average of 92.1%, as it has done for the last three years.
- 4.11 The percentage attendance margin of compulsory school age children in Bridgend attending maintained primary schools and eligible for FSM compared to those pupils who are not eligible for FSM, has increased in the academic year 2017-18 to 2.4% from 2.3% in 2016-17.
- 4.12 However, this margin remains better than the all-Wales average which has increased in the same period from 2.7% to 3.0%.
- 4.13 Bridgend's performance has remained consistently better than the all-Wales average during the last three years.
- 4.14 Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees in primary schools is outlined in the table below:

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Bridgend</b>			<b>Wales</b>		
Academic year	Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	Persistent absence %	% of pupils who are persistent absentees	Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	Persistent absence %	% of pupils who are persistent absentees
2012-2013	247	11.8	2.7	4778	10.6	2.4
2013-2014	138	7.5	1.5	3342	8.7	1.7
2014-2015	105	6.2	1.1	2858	7.6	1.4
2015-2016	107	6.7	1.1	3107	8.2	1.5
2016-2017	114	6.9	1.1	3249	8.4	1.5
2017-2018	143	7.6	1.4	3694	9.1	1.7

- 4.15 The threshold applied for categorising persistent absenteeism is below 80%. In 2017-2018, 143 pupils within primary schools were identified as part of this cohort. This equates to 1.4% of pupils who were considered persistent absentees, which remains better than the all-Wales average of 1.7%, as it has done for the last five years.
- 4.16 Comparative secondary school attendance data for the period 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 is outlined in the following table:

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>
BCBC	94.5%	94.4%	93.9%
CSC	94.4%	94.1%	93.7%
Wales	94.2%	94.1%	93.9%

- 4.17 Secondary school attendance has reduced in 2017-2018 by 0.5% to 93.9% compared to 2016-2017. However, performance was reported in line with the all-Wales average of 93.9% for the same period, and above the CSC average of 93.7%
- 4.18 In Bridgend for the autumn term of 2018-2019, attendance at secondary schools was recorded at 93.9%, compared to 93.8% for the same period in 2017-2018.
- 4.19 Of the 9 secondary schools in Bridgend, 6 reported attendance in 2017-2018 above the all-Wales average of 93.9%. Attendance in the 6 schools ranged from 94.1% to 95.0%
- 4.20 The percentage attendance of compulsory school age children attending maintained secondary schools and eligible for FSM compared to those pupils who are not eligible for FSM is outlined in the table below:

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Bridgend %</b>			<b>Wales %</b>		
	Non FSM	FSM	Difference	Non FSM	FSM	Difference
Academic year						
2015-2016	95.2	91.3	3.9	95	90.2	4.8
2016-2017	95.1	90.9	4.2	94.9	90.1	4.8
2017-2018	94.7	90.2	4.5	94.7	89.6	5.1

*Source: All Wales core datasets*

- 4.21 The percentage attendance margin of compulsory school age children attending maintained secondary schools and eligible for FSM compared to those pupils who are not eligible for FSM, has grown from 4.2% in 2016-17 to 4.5% in 2017-2018.
- 4.22 However, this figure remains better than the all-Wales average of 5.1% in 2017-2018.
- 4.23 Bridgend's performance remains consistently better than the Welsh average during the last three years.
- 4.24 Attendance at secondary schools for those pupils entitled to free school meals was reported at 90.2% for 2017-2018. Although this figure has fallen by 0.7% since 2016-2017 it remains above the Welsh average of 89.6%, as it has done for the last three years.
- 4.25 Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees in secondary schools are outlined in the table below:

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Bridgend</b>			<b>Wales</b>		
Academic year	Number of Pupils who are persistent absentees	Persistent absence %	% of Pupils who are Persistent Absentees	Number of Pupils who are Persistent Absentees	Persistent absence %	% of Pupils who are Persistent Absentees
2012-13	564	29.1	6.9	10399	26.8	6.2
2013-14	343	22.7	4.4	8061	25.0	5.0
2014-15	269	20.4	3.5	7094	23.7	4.5
2015-16	237	18.5	3.1	6119	21.9	3.9
2016-17	265	20.4	3.4	6387	22.8	4.0
2017-18	295	20.2	3.9	6598	23.0	4.1

Source: All Wales core datasets

4.26 The threshold applied for categorising persistent absenteeism is below 80%. In 2017-2018, 295 pupils within secondary schools were identified as part of this cohort. 3.9% of pupils were considered persistent absentees, which remains better than the Welsh average of 4.1%, as it has done for the last five years.

4.27 Comparative primary school attendance data with Central South Consortium (CSC) for the period 2015-2016 to 2017-2018 for pupils in the following vulnerable groups are outlined in the following tables:

- looked after children (LAC);
- pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)
- pupils with special educational needs (SEN) – Statemented (S) and School Action Plus (SA+)

<b>Primary</b>	<b>Bridgend</b>				<b>CSC Level</b>			
Academic year	All Pupils	LAC	EAL	SEN (SA+ & S)	All Pupils	LAC	EAL	SEN (SA+ & S)
2015-2016	95.3	97.6	95.0	93.7	94.9	96.7	94.6	93.3
2016-2017	95.2	96.3	95.1	94.1	94.9	96.4	94.9	93.6
2017-2018	94.9	97.0	94.9	93.1	94.6	96.6	94.8	92.8

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Bridgend</b>				<b>CSC Level</b>			
Academic year	All Pupils	LAC	EAL	SEN (SA+ & S)	All Pupils	LAC	EAL	SEN (SA+ & S)
2015-2016	94.5	95.5	96.4	93.1	94.4	94.9	95.6	91.6
2016-2017	94.4	96.0	95.9	91.7	94.1	95.1	95.7	89.9
2017-2018	93.9	96.7	96.2	92.4	93.7	95.2	95.6	89.9

Source: Data provided by CSC using data from PLASC and statutory attendance collections.

4.28 The percentage attendance achieved by looked after children in primary schools rose 0.7% in 2017-2018 from 96.3% to 97.0% which is now above the CSC average

of 96.6%. Due to the individual circumstances surrounding a looked after child there can be huge impacts on data outcomes as the cohort is small.

- 4.29 The percentage attendance achieved by looked after children in secondary schools children rose 0.7% in 2017-18 from 96.0% to 96.7%. This remains above the CSC average of 95.2%, as it has for the last 3 years.
- 4.30 The percentage attendance achieved by primary school children with English as an additional language fell 0.2% from 95.1% in 2016-2017 to 94.9% in 2017-2018. This remains above the CSC average of 94.8%, as it has for the last three years.
- 4.31 The percentage attendance achieved by EAL secondary school children rose 0.3% from 95.9% in 2016-2017 to 96.2% in 2017-2018. This remains above the CSC average of 95.6%, as it has for the last three years.
- 4.32 Due to the individual circumstances surrounding a pupil who has English as an additional language there can be huge impacts on data outcomes as the cohort is small.
- 4.33 The percentage attendance achieved by school action plus and statemented primary school children fell 1.0% from 94.1% in 2016-2017 to 93.1% in 2017-2018. This remains above the CSC average of 92.8%, as it has for the last three years.
- 4.34 The percentage attendance achieved by school action plus and statemented secondary school children rose 0.7% from 91.7% in 2016-17 to 92.4% in 2017-18. This remains above the CSC average of 89.9%, as it has for the last 3 years.
- 4.35 Attached at Appendix A is a copy of the revised local authority school attendance strategy for 2018-2021 which highlights (in 13.3 of the document) the proposed amendment.

## **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

- 5.1. There is no effect on the policy framework and procedure rules.

## **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 6.1. There are no equality implications directly arising from this report or strategy.

## **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment**

- 7.1. A Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment has been completed and is detailed in Appendix B. A summary of the implications from the assessment relating to the five ways of working is as follows:

Long-term	The long term aim of the strategy is to improve school attendance and in turn increase attainment levels
Prevention	The strategy identifies measures to mitigate barriers to regular school attendance

Integration	Early intervention and prevention are crucial so that identified pupils and their families can be supported appropriately
Collaboration	Collaboration is key to improve school attendance
Involvement	Pupils, families and other stakeholders are involved in improving attendance levels

## **8. Financial implications**

8.1. The strategy will be implemented within existing resources.

## **9. Recommendation**

9.1. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- approves the revised local authority Attendance Strategy 2018-2021; and
- considers the school attendance data outlined within the report

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# **Bridgend County Borough Council**

## **School Attendance Strategy 2018 - 2021**

**‘Success Starts at School’**



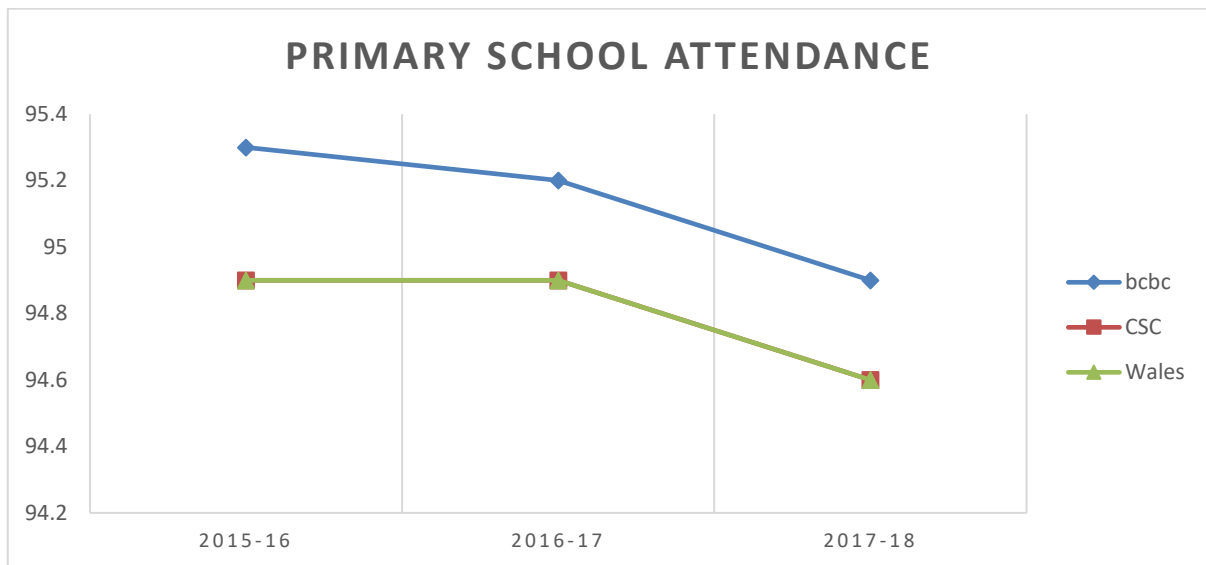
## **1. Vision and priorities**

- 1.1. Bridgend County Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2022 identifies our vision of: 'One Council working together to improve lives'
- 1.2. The key priorities we want to achieve are:
  - Supporting a successful economy
  - Helping people to become more self-reliant
  - Making smarter use of resources.
- 1.3. We see a future for people of all ages where they can fulfil their dreams and achieve their full potential. They will continue to learn and develop throughout their lives, becoming healthy, creative, responsible and caring adults.
- 1.4. We believe that at the foundation of this is good education for all our children and that regular attendance and punctuality at school are the key drivers in ensuring children of school age are properly engaged in education. The local authority and schools will take the necessary steps to improve school attendance and ensure that all welfare needs of school-aged children are addressed. Bridgend County Borough Council's BCBC education welfare officers work collaboratively with partner agencies to address barriers to learning and social inclusion, and also to promote school attendance.

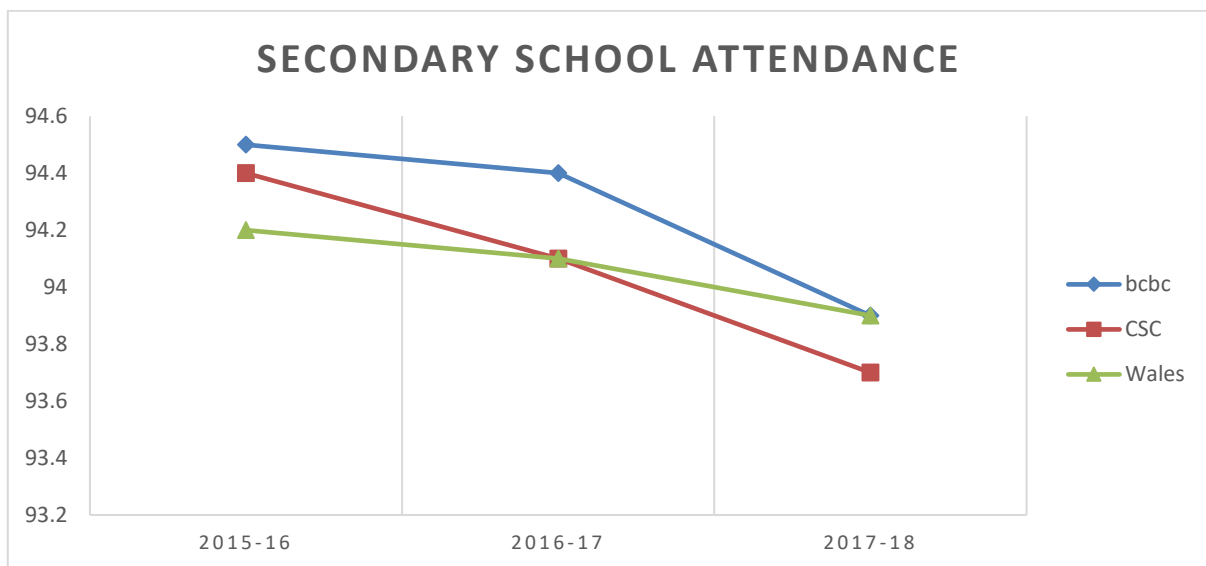
## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. Bridgend County Borough Council as of spring term 2017, has 17,433 compulsory school age pupils on roll at schools across the county borough. Where children are in formal education, a high level of school attendance is essential for children to ensure they thrive academically and socially. Children who miss school for unauthorised reasons often miss critical parts of the curriculum which then can also increase the risk of falling behind and disengagement with education by the child. Children can also become socially isolated when they miss out on shared learning and social experiences with their peers in school on a regular basis. Therefore, it is critically important that we ensure that all children in Bridgend schools are making the most of their learning opportunities through regular attendance. Accessing education is identified under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in articles 28 and 29.
- 2.2. Over the past three academic years, school attendance rates have reduced but remain above the Welsh average in primary schools and in line with the Welsh average for secondary schools. This is evidenced in figures 1 and 2 below.

**Figure 1 Primary school attendance in Bridgend schools 2015-2016 to 2017-2018**



**Figure 2 Secondary school attendance in Bridgend schools 2015-2016 to 2017-2018**



### 3. National context

3.1. The policy document 'Every Child Matters' was introduced by national government in 2003 which was partly in response to the death of Victoria Climbié. This sets out the following outcomes for children and young people:

- stay safe
- be healthy
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic wellbeing

- 3.2. Evidence suggests that there is a clear link between good educational attainment and high school attendance. Poor attendance at school has a detrimental effect on a child's learning and can have a huge impact on their wellbeing. We consider that positive attendance at school is the key to raising standards of achievement.
- 3.3. Wales has seen a decline in international Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results. This major study of educational performance is undertaken by 15-year-olds in 72 countries every three years. Wales was the lowest of the UK nations in science, reading and mathematics in 2016 test results. Welsh Government is committed to improving educational attainment and standards across the board.

#### **4. Local context**

- 4.1. Bridgend County Borough Council is committed to maintaining consistently high levels of pupil attendance at school and recognises that improving attendance is a crucial factor in maintaining standards of pupil performance and achievement. The local authority will strive to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all pupils.
- 4.2. Attendance rates still need to be in line with the Welsh Government and Central South Consortium's (CSC) targets of 95% and our good work needs to continue with schools and the Early Help service to achieve this and to ensure continuous improvement.
- 4.3. It is not a legal requirement that pupils be educated at a school. The legal requirements on parents in relation to the education of their children are set out in section 7 of Education Act (EA) 1996. That section provides that every parent of every child of compulsory school age must ensure that he or she receives efficient full-time education at a school or otherwise.
- 4.4. Parents may satisfy their duty under this section by providing efficient full-time education, suitable to the child (within the meaning of section 7), otherwise than at a school. The term 'otherwise than at a school' is broad enough to encompass education at home.
- 4.5. Section 10 of EA 1996 places the Welsh Ministers under a general duty to promote the education of the people of Wales.
- 4.6. BCBC believes that for most children their educational needs will be best met within the school system, and that, where this is the route selected by parents, that this requires a commitment to regular school attendance.
- 4.7. Regular school attendance is vital for pupils. Failure of pupils, to attend school increases the risk of leaving school without qualifications and allows greater opportunity for young people to be drawn into crime and antisocial behaviour. It can also leave some young people vulnerable to harm by adults.

## **5. Key principles**

5.1. Our attendance strategy has been developed with the following key principles at its heart:

- Pupils' achievements and progress are directly influenced by attendance.
- Poor attendance can lead to reduced motivation and involvement in education.
- Schools play a critical role in attendance and the actions of school staff are significant factors in influencing pupil behaviour and attitudes, in particular those relating to attendance.
- Pupils should feel supported and have their attendance valued and rewarded.
- Our starting point is an assumption that most pupils want to attend school to learn and to achieve their full potential but may not always be able to do so for reasons beyond their control. The school plays a critical role in the early identification of the barriers to education for all pupils.
- All pupils have the right of equal access to a good education and should not be deprived of opportunity by non-attendance at school.
- Pupils, parents and carers have clear responsibilities to ensure good attendance. These should be made clear to them by the school through good communication.
- Pupils are more likely to respond positively, to learn and to attend, where they are treated equally, rewarded and supported.
- The start and end to the school day, and procedures for registration, have a substantial influence on pupils' attitudes and attendance. Good punctuality and robust systems for ensuring pupils are punctual are a significant factor in promoting attendance.
- Pupils are less likely to be poor attendees when attendance is monitored and followed up swiftly.
- Robust systems for identifying and responding to the needs of different pupils' reasons for absence are critical.
- The engagement of pupils in ensuring good attendance is important. Pupils are likely to respond more positively when their views are sought, they are listened to and there is an appropriate response to their needs and opinions.

## **6. The legal context**

6.1 While the parent is primarily responsible for ensuring their child attends their registered school regularly, where school attendance problems occur, the key to resolving these is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the local authority. There is, however, a legal framework for the role of the school and of the local authority which sets out their responsibilities in this area.

6.2 The legal framework governing attendance is established in various Education Acts and their associated regulations.

The Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on:

- the local authority to provide schools and enforce attendance; and
- schools to register attendance and notify the local authority of a child's absence from school.

Section 7 of the above Act states that:

6.3 'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

Section 444 further states that:

6.4 'The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law'.

An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong;
- the pupil's catchment school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the local authority; and
- a limited defence is available to the parents of Traveller children.

6.5 Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 states if it appears to a local authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education."

Where a parent on whom a notice has been served fails to satisfy the local authority, within the period specified in the notice, that the child is receiving suitable education, and in the opinion of the local authority, it is expedient that the child should attend school, the authority shall serve on the parent a "school attendance order" in such form as may be prescribed, requiring him to cause the child to become a registered pupil at a school named in the order.

## **7. The role of the local authority**

7.1 The focus for the local authority is that of early intervention and prevention, working in a more targeted way with pupils and their families. Schools are supported to identify children where there are early signs of poor attendance. The local authority works with families through the Joint Assessment Family Framework approach (JAFF) and Team around the Family (TAF) process to address issues which will be multi agency led.

7.2 The local authority will support schools in taking a rigorous line in improving absence. While the main focus is always to build strong positive relationships with parents and schools, the local authority will progress prosecutions where it considers this is appropriate and where it has a legal obligation to do so. For electively home educated pupils, if the local authority is not satisfied that the child is receiving a suitable education, the local authority can serve a school attendance order notice on the parent(s) requiring them to satisfy the local authority within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.

- 7.3 Parents and carers will be encouraged to work closely with education welfare officers (EWOs) and other services, however, where there is non-engagement and/or no improvement in attendance, the local authority will pursue prosecutions. In some situations, failure to meet a child's educational needs can become a cause for referral to other agencies by virtue of the duty to report under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 (SSWBA).

### **Multi-agency working**

- 7.4 EWOs visit primary schools on a three-weekly basis. This is to ensure that schools and EWOs identify vulnerable pupils at the earliest stage. With EWOs working within early help teams in locality hubs, in the county borough they are able to provide a holistic approach to ensuring appropriate support is available for pupils and families. Multi-agency working is the key to ensuring families receive the support based on need. Locality hubs consist of EWOs, family engagement officers (FEOs), behaviour support teachers, inclusion officers, social workers and youth workers.
- 7.5 Regular truancy patrols are undertaken and the EWO's work closely with the local Police. The youth justice service (WBYJES), health services, housing associations, and voluntary organisations are also actively involved in working with the EWOs in assisting in resolving non-school attendance of pupils and supporting families.

### **Targeted interventions**

- 7.6 Education welfare officers can offer additional support to schools on a needs-led basis in order to improve attendance. This will form part of a 'team around the school approach' which involves the lead EWO and schools discussing the individual need and arranging an appropriate plan for improving attendance. This is an intensive intervention approach and involves the locality teams working together around the school and community to improve attendance levels. This could consist of a range of initiatives, for example attendance panels including governor involvement, parents, pupils, EWOs and school staff. Attendance is discussed in a formal setting and sets out the importance of regular school attendance and the consequences if attendance fails to improve. Home visits are undertaken for those pupils not in school without good reason and targeting those with persistent absence.

### **Fixed penalty notices**

- 7.7 Fixed penalty notices (FPNs) will allow schools to issue FPNs to the parents of children and young people who have unauthorised absences from school. FPNs came into force in September 2014 as a result of new legislation (ie the Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013). A Code of Conduct has been devised by BCBC. The issuing of the FPNs will rest with the lead EWO in response to requests from headteachers, nominated representatives or police officers. FPNs have been widely used in England for several years. It is anticipated that FPNs will be used to improve attendance and prevent unnecessary absences from school in the following circumstances:

- Minimum of 10 unauthorised absences in the current term
- Minimum of 10 sessions of lateness after close of registration
- Unauthorised absence due to a term-time holiday

- Pupil regularly coming to the attention of the police during school hours with justified reason
- Parents/carers have failed to engage with schools/EWS but where court sanctions have not been instigated

7.8 The EWO and the school will reflect on the following in considering whether an FPN can be issued:

- level of absence;
- any equalities considerations;
- statement of special educational needs;
- history of attendance;
- defences which may be available;
- level of parental engagement; and
- any adverse effect a fine will have on the welfare of the family.

7.9 The withdrawal of an FPN may only be revoked where it is proven that:

- the notice has been issued to the wrong person to an incorrect address;
- the notice did not conform to code of conduct;
- evidence demonstrates that the notice should not have been issued (eg medical evidence provided); and
- circumstances warrant its withdrawal.

7.10 The legislation governing the implementation of FPN is outlined in:

- Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013
- Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure 2011
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (the right to an education)

7.11 An FPN is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days, the local authority must either prosecute parents/carers for the offence or withdraw the notice.

### **Term-time holidays**

7.12 BCBC recognises the effect that absence from school has on educational attainment. Headteachers have the discretion of authorising up to 10 days under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday, and in law, must apply for permission in advance.

## **8. The education welfare officer**

8.1 The education welfare officer (EWO) has the responsibility of implementing the statutory duties in relation to securing school attendance. The EWO has a key function in working with schools, families, pupils, agencies (statutory and voluntary) in order to promote regular school attendance.

8.2 The EWO will take the lead role for the local authority in supporting school attendance. The EWO is managed and funded centrally and EWO time is allocated on a needs-led basis.

8.3 The local authority consists of a lead EWO and a team of EWOs. Each EWO is based within early help teams across locality hubs in the north, east and west of the county borough. Each EWO has a designated secondary school and its associate feeder primary schools.

## **9. The role of parents**

9.1 Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Parents are expected to report their child's absence from school on the first day of absence and on the return provide a written explanation. Parents are requested to avoid taking family holidays during term time, and work with schools and relevant agencies when pupils have attendance issues.

9.2 In addition to attendance, punctuality is equally important. If a pupil continually arrives to school five minutes late, this will amount to losing three days each year. If a pupil arrives after the closure of the register, then this will count as an unauthorised absence which if deemed appropriate may lead to a referral to the EWO.

9.3 Absence can also make children vulnerable to involvement with crime and anti-social behaviour.

9.4 The report 'Improving attendance at school' carried out by the Department of Education in England in 2010, explains there is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement of pupils who miss more than 50% of school. Only 3% manage to achieve 5 or more GCSE at Grade A\*-C including Mathematics and English. It highlights that 73% of pupils who have over 95% attendance achieve 5 or more GCSE at Grades A\*-C.

9.5 Not only is school attendance and attainment important, it also enables young people to maintain positive friendships, promotes wellbeing and provides them with good grounding for their future.

9.6 Parents/carers can support the regular and punctual attendance of their children by:

- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time each day
- ensuring that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance
- notifying the school as soon as possible of any absence and confirm this in writing when the child returns to school
- not booking family holidays during term-time
- talking to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend

## **10. The responsibility of schools**

10.1 Schools have a statutory duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. All schools within BCBC have a clear attendance policy which sets out how



attendance is managed and monitored. All school staff should be trained on attendance and made aware of the school's attendance policy.

10.2 Schools should communicate all attendance and welfare concerns to their nominated EWO. A nominated governor should have the lead responsibility for attendance. All schools should adopt a first day absence procedures to ensure and safeguard pupils and to ensure all parents are made aware when their child is not in school.

10.3 All schools should adopt the Central South Consortium's 'Callio' attendance system (or equivalent).

## **11. Data collection, attendance targets and auditing**

11.1 Schools supply attendance data through their schools management information system (MIS). Data is reported to the Central South Consortium (CSC), acting on behalf of the local authority as a commissioned service with the responsibility for school improvement. Attendance data is also provided to Welsh Government and is used to inform national performance indicators. The local authority has access to data shared on a cluster basis. Attendance targets for schools are set by school governing bodies and CSC challenge advisers.

11.2 Attendance audits will be undertaken for all schools. The lead EWO distributes an attendance audit toolkit for schools in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of attendance processes in each school, and also to devise an action plan for improvements from these. Key features will include:

- examining existing procedures;
- inspecting attendance information;
- related documentation and school policies;
- assessing the type and levels of communication with parents;
- interviewing staff and pupils;
- analysing attendance data;
- considering school strategies used to promote attendance and sharing good practice; and
- evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention and support services.

## **12. Training and support**

12.1 All staff with responsibility for attendance in schools should receive appropriate training including the correct use of codes, appropriate challenge to parents, accurate input of data, exporting data and also full usage and knowledge of SIMS.

12.2 BCBC's EWOs will offer support to all schools covering such issues as:

- strategies for promoting regular attendance;
- strategies for addressing persistent absenteeism;
- improving communication with parents;
- good practice in monitoring punctuality;
- developing a whole-school attendance policy; and

- rewards and incentives.

### **13. Celebrating good and improved attendance**

- 13.1 Schools are encouraged to promote good attendance using a range of initiatives at a whole school, year group, class or individual pupil level.
- 13.2 This can include certificates, pens or prizes such as books. Achievements that are congratulated in assemblies are considered to be particularly effective. All schools should display their attendance marketing materials appropriately in foyers, school websites, classrooms, walls and banners can be used on the periphery of the school estate. This helps raise awareness and the importance of good attendance for pupils, teachers, parents and visitors to schools.
- 13.3 However, schools must ensure it takes the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 into consideration and not disadvantage those pupils with a disability or medical condition. This means that a young person with an attendance record of less than 100% because of health reasons or other circumstances beyond the control of the individual child, should not be negatively impacted with regards to schools' rewards systems.

### **14. Traveller children**

- 14.1 We will work closely with the families of Traveller children to ensure they are attending school. The local authority equalities and engagement officer will be able to provide advice and guidance to schools to ensure the regular attendance of children from Traveller communities. Schools are particularly encouraged to:
- create an inclusive culture which promotes equality and recognises cultural diversity and difference;
  - show high expectations of attendance with all registered pupils;
  - respond promptly to absences through immediate telephone or other enquiries;
  - refer any continuing or repeated absence to the EWS;
  - develop strategies to support pupils with literacy or learning difficulties;
  - support educational continuity while children are travelling;
  - give additional support if needed on entry to school for traveller children;
  - ensure adequate support during transition (eg from key stage 2 to key stage 3; and
  - seek appropriate advice from the local authority if necessary.

### **15. Supporting the attendance of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN)**

- 15.1 BCBC recognises that children with ALN or SEN (special educational needs), regardless of whether this has been formally diagnosed, may prevent some children from attending school. The EWO and educational psychology service, will work with headteachers, the school additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCO) and other school staff to address pupil's poor attendance which may be related to unidentified or unmet SEN.

### **16. Supporting the attendance of pupils who may have been bullied**

- 16.1 BCBC recognises that bullying is an issue which prevents some children from attending school or from achieving their full potential when they do attend.
- 16.2 BCBC will, in partnership with schools, continue to offer support to pupils where attendance is being affected by actual or perceived bullying.

## **17. Supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups**

17.1 BCBC will respond appropriately to support school attendance of pupils considered vulnerable. The Vulnerable Groups Team and the inclusion service will play a key role in supporting such pupils. Such groups might include:

- pregnant school girls and teenage mothers;
- children transferring school;
- children entering school outside the normal year of entry;
- young offenders;
- children from families under stress;
- young carers;
- school phobics;
- looked after children;
- those eligible for free school meals;
- children with special educational needs; and
- pupils whose parents are actively considering deregistration from school to become EHE (electively home educated).

17.2 The education welfare officers will work closely with the Vulnerable Groups Team to support these groups identified by Estyn as potentially vulnerable.

## **18. Action planning**

18.1 The EWO will work with schools to develop action plans to improve attendance at whole school level. This will rely on individual schools' analysis of data and of its attendance profile. Schools should work closely with the EWO to develop action plans for school level action as well as developing individual pupil level action plans.

18.2 Schools with concerning levels of absence will be encouraged to develop an agreed school action plan to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism.

18.3 The main areas that should be covered in the whole school action plan are as follows:

- improved senior leadership response to attendance;
- robust recording and monitoring systems;
- improved tracking and monitoring arrangements;
- targeted additional support;
- improve support and challenge for parents;
- targeted support to vulnerable groups;
- working with partners to support parents to reduce illness related absence;
- target specific work with parents of children in early years settings to ensure good attendance habits are developed early and parents understand their responsibilities; and
- workforce development.



Appendix B

WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015 ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Description (key aims):</b>	
<b>Section 1 Complete the table below to assess how well you have applied the 5 ways of working.</b>	
<b>Long-term</b> (The importance of balancing short term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long term needs)	<b>1. How does your project / activity balance short-term need with the long-term and planning for the future?</b>
	The attendance data collected shows attendance of all schools for the last three academic years. High levels of attendance assist in improving educational attainment. Where attendance levels are a concern, this impacts on a child’s learning and has a detrimental effect on their wellbeing. Where pupils have been absent for long periods of time it is likely that they will not reach their full potential.
<b>Prevention</b> (How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives)	<b>2. How does your project / activity put resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse?</b>
	Where attendance falls below 92% education welfare officers identify those pupils with a view to offering appropriate support for both the family and pupil. Early identification is key in order to prevent the issues becoming entrenched.
<b>Integration</b> (Considering how the public body’s well-being objectives may impact upon each	<b>3. How does your project / activity deliver economic, social, environmental &amp; cultural outcomes together?</b>
	Early intervention and prevention are crucial so that families can be supported appropriately. There are clear links between good educational attainment and high levels of attendance.

<p>of the wellbeing goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies)</p>	
<p><b>Collaboration</b></p> <p>(Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body meet its well-being objectives)</p>	<p><b>4. How does your project / activity involve working together with partners (internal and external) to deliver well-being objectives?</b></p> <p>Education welfare officers works closely with other services including early help colleagues and schools who deliver wellbeing support. The lead education welfare officer works closely with the therapeutic practitioners in alternative provision. ( The Bridge )</p>
<p><b>Involvement</b></p> <p>(The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves)</p>	<p><b>5. How does your project / activity involve stakeholders with an interest in achieving the well-being goals? How do those stakeholders reflect the diversity of the area?</b></p> <p>The role of the education welfare officer is statutory and local authorities are accountable for ensuring every child of compulsory school age attends school regularly. The Education Act 1996 ensures that this is adhered to. The All Wales education welfare service managers meet on a termly basis along with Welsh Government to review relevant guidance and legislation.</p>

**Section 2 Assess how well your project / activity will result in multiple benefits for our communities and contribute to the national well-being goals (use Appendix 1 to help you).**

Description of the Well-being goals	How will your project / activity deliver benefits to our communities under the national well-being goals?	Is there any way to maximise the benefits or minimise any negative impacts to our communities (and the contribution to the national well-being goals)?
<p><b>A prosperous Wales</b> An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.</p>	<p>With appropriate support for pupils to ensure that they attend school regularly will improve their wellbeing and relationships within the family. Parents will in turn feel positive and take control of their lives whether that be seeking employment opportunities or obtaining support for any parenting issues.</p>	<p>Early intervention from early help or safeguarding may have a positive impact.</p>
<p><b>A resilient Wales</b> A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).</p>	<p>Education welfare officers offer support and use their expertise to facilitate behaviour change in attitudes towards attending school regularly. A positive emphasis on attending school and its opportunities for children and young people when they leave the education system is paramount.</p>	<p>Attendance data is collated termly which includes school level attendance.</p>
<p><b>A healthier Wales</b> A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.</p>	<p>Positives around attending school regularly and the benefits this has for children and young people is emphasised when working with families .Where health needs are identified targeted support is available, and</p>	<p>Education welfare support is important. Only where attending continues to improve and is above the threshold of 92% does the intervention from EWOs</p>

	all professionals work together to ensure that appropriate support and levels of education are provided.	end. Monitoring of attendance levels is completed on a weekly basis by EWOs.
<p><b>A more equal Wales</b> A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).</p>	Education welfare officers work with all pupils and families to ensure that their attendance levels are acceptable irrelevant of their background or circumstances.	Education welfare is a statutory service.
<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b> Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.</p>	Non-attendance at school links to underachievement and potentially anti-social behaviour where pupils can be involved in risk taking behaviours during school hours. Education welfare officers work with Police and other agencies to ensure that these issues are addressed where required.	Prevention work should have a positive impact on the community.
<p><b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b> A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.</p>	Participation in cultural, arts and sporting activities help improve mental health. Where there are improvements in a family's wellbeing, positive changes can be made.	<p>Welsh language is promoted, and correspondence are bi-lingual.</p> <p>The local authority's welsh cluster of schools is supported by a welsh speaking education welfare officer</p>
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales</b> A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.</p>	Education welfare is a statutory service in order to ensure regular school attendance under the Education Act 1996. Education welfare officers work closely with families and pupils to improve outcomes in all areas which affect the reasons for non-school attendance.	Improved attendance levels will impact positively on schools and the community.



**Section 3 Will your project / activity affect people or groups of people with protected characteristics? Explain what will be done to maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impacts**

Protected characteristics	Will your project / activity have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristic?	Will your project / activity have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristic?	Is there any way to maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impacts?
Age:	Yes	No	Early intervention – referrals from schools on a weekly basis. This will ensure appropriate support is provided in order to improve attendance levels.
Gender reassignment:	Yes	No	
Marriage or civil partnership:	Yes	No	
Pregnancy or maternity:	Yes	No	
Race:	Yes	No	
Religion or Belief:	Yes	No	
Race:	Yes	No	
Sex:	Yes	No	
Welsh Language:	Yes	No	

**Section 4 Identify decision meeting for Project/activity e.g. Cabinet, Council or delegated decision taken by Executive Members and/or Chief Officers**

Cabinet

**Compiling Officers Name:**

Charlotte Williams

**Compiling Officers Job Title:**

Lead Education Welfare Officer

**Date completed:**

18 January 2019