

Meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

18 November 2024

Recommendations / Information requested

	Recommendations / Information Requested:	Response:	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Not Accepted:
Pupil Attendance			
<u>Recommendations:</u>			
1	<p>Members discussed the inconsistent approaches taken by schools within the county borough to authorised and unauthorised pupil leave during term time and the All Wales Attendance Framework not permitting local authorities to impose a blanket policy across all schools, highlighting that the Framework was 12 years old.</p> <p>a. The Committee recommended that the Authority explore whether Welsh Government planned to update their Attendance Framework and the cost of fixed penalty notices.</p> <p>b. The Committee also recommended that an exercise be undertaken to ascertain the approach taken by schools in other local authorities, to understand</p>	<p>a) There has been no notification or indication that Welsh Government plan to update their Attendance Framework or the cost of fixed penalty notices. Welsh Government have established a working group to consider attendance coding changes which Bridgend are part of. This may result in the framework being updated in line with any proposed coding changes.</p> <p>b) Other local authorities have been consulted and are in a similar position to Bridgend. Work is underway with neighbouring local</p>	Accepted

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	whether there is a consistent approach within those authorities.	authorities to determine best practice in this area.	
2	Members discussed the extent to which mental health was a contributory factor to poor attendance within schools and Officers explained how they worked with health professionals, utilising the Welsh Government NEST Framework, which aims to ensure a whole system approach for developing mental health, well-being and support. The Committee recommended that Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board be approached for their view regarding the range of issues or reasons for pupil absence including analysis of this information for groups of learners with particular characteristics / backgrounds / circumstances, e.g. care experienced children.	This will be discussed at the All-Wales Attendance Managers Group as this analysis needs to be led by local authorities.	Partially accepted

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3	<p>Members discussed the complex reasons for pupil absenteeism and that it was important to work with parents on individual needs, recognising that there was not a one-size-fits-all solution. The Committee expressed their support for the work of the Education Welfare Service and requested more information to further understand the work they carried out including how many Officers had been deployed to support and interact with families and any anonymised case studies that could be provided.</p>	<p>Anonymised case studies are attached for the committees information (with more available on request).</p> <p>Currently there are 7.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) education welfare officers (EWOs) employed by the local authority with a further 3 FTE in post funded by the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) which currently runs to 31 March 2025. The three EIG-funded EWO posts are deployed on a peripatetic basis and work across all clusters depending on identified need.</p> <p>EWOs engage with families via home visits, school meetings, telephone calls and written correspondence. They can assist in identifying barriers, areas of need and signpost and refer to support services, where appropriate.</p> <p>Attendance drives are completed termly to target under 92% attendance with N (no reason for absence) and O (unauthorised absence) codes on the day. This involves EWOs, lead workers and family engagement officers.</p> <p>EWOs support school initiatives to improve attendance and punctuality such as late on the gate, parents evening and information sharing sessions.</p>	Accepted

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		They work with pupils on a one-to-one basis to support and encourage attendance at school as well as fulfilling their safeguarding duties completing welfare visits.	
4	With reference to Table 1 on page 12 of the agenda pack relating to pupil attendance during the period 2018-2019 to 2023-2024, Members queried how much of the attendance percentage was for authorised or unauthorised absence and how much was linked to children who were suspended from school at that time. The Committee requested a further breakdown showing how schools record attendance and clarifying leave that was authorised and unauthorised.	A coding report has been completed for autumn term 2024. Analysis of this is underway and emerging themes will be shared with the Committee in the March 2025 update report.	Accepted
5	Members discussed grades and levels and heard about the use of progress points, enabling learners to see and work towards their own personal targets, reducing stress and frustration that some learners may feel, however the Committee expressed concern regarding Year 11 pupil attendance levels and requested a written update that the Corporate Director had offered to provide to Members of the Committee, following	Analysis will be undertaken, and an update shared with the Committee at its March 2025 meeting.	Accepted

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	analysis of the attendance data for Year 11 pupils.		
Forward Work Programme Update			
<u>Request:</u>			
	<p>i. The Committee requested that Attendance be included within the scope of the Behaviour and Exclusions report scheduled for the March meeting to see what progress has been made as a result of some of the measures which would have been implemented.</p> <p>ii. Given the numerous references made during the meeting to the importance of mental health and wellbeing support to helping learners attend school and achieve an education, the Committee requested that this topic be included on the forward work programme for future consideration. The Committee requested the scope of this report</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>	

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	<p>include a holistic focus on the mental health and wellbeing support provided to learners to assist them to attend education, including information regarding any support available from Social Services, General Practitioners, the Health Board and the Third Sector.</p> <p>iii. The Committee requested that representatives from the Health Board and the Youth Council be invited to the above relevant meetings.</p>	Agreed	