

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Board

26th January, 2016

Report of the Head of Transformation – Andrew Thomas

Matter for information

Wards Affected: All

PUPIL ATTENDANCE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with information and data in relation to Neath Port Talbot pupil attendance covering the autumn term period 2016/17.

Background

2. This report provides Members with details of the latest available data up to and including December, 2016.

Attendance Data

3. As of the end of December, 2016, attendance in both the primary and secondary sectors was slightly higher than for the whole of the 2015/16 academic year. The primary sector stood at 94.83% (+0.29%) with the secondary sector at 93.36% (+0.04%). However, like-for-like by comparing just the autumn term of 2016 with the autumn term of 2015 the data for the same periods shows attendance is lower across the two sectors by 0.28% in the primary sector and 0.93% in the secondary sector.

4. During the autumn term 16 primary schools increased their attendance compared with the same period the previous year, with 41 reporting a decrease. In the secondary sector 2 schools increased their attendance with 7 reporting a decrease. [Note: for the purpose of statistical reporting, the data for Ysgol Bae Baglan as an all-through school has been disaggregated into both the primary and secondary sectors.] A list of the individual school data comparing the two autumn terms is provided in Appendix A to this report.
5. Analysis of the data confirms what was already known that during November and December attendance was affected particularly hard by illness across a significant number of schools. In December alone at one school illness accounted for almost 9% of possible pupil attendance, with the whole-school attendance rate being 89.55%. Recorded illness during the month of December across both the sectors was practically double that of recorded illness just two months previous during October.
6. The secondary sector in particular was affected in December by illness with attendance almost 3% lower than it was compared to December 2015. The primary sector saw a decrease of just over 1% comparing the same period.
7. This sharp increase in sickness amongst pupils has been reflected across schools in neighbouring authorities who are also reporting higher than usual absences. There is early evidence to suggest that school staff absence was also affected due to illness during the same period.
8. Since the Christmas break and the start of the new term anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that whilst there remain small pockets of pupils reporting with illness, absence has overall returned to near normal levels. January's data will not be available to verify this until mid-February.

Ensuring Improvement

9. There continues to be an emphasis at both local authority and school level on the priority of increasing pupil attendance. At the autumn term meeting of the Chair and Vice-chair of Governors with the Senior Management Team of the Education Directorate the Director of Education and Cabinet Member once again renewed their plea to governors for pupil attendance to remain a focused priority of all schools and at individual governing body meetings.

10. During the autumn term the Manager of the School and Family Support Team met with primary and secondary headteacher's at the respective LLAN and NAASH meetings to discuss strategies to improve attendance. Aside from the notable increase during November/December referred to above, schools have been asked to concentrate efforts on reducing use of the 'I' (illness) code by not readily and always accepting at face value notification that a pupil is too unwell to attend school. Members have previously been informed that reported illness amongst Neath Port Talbot pupils is one of the highest in Wales. It is readily accepted that on occasion pupils suffer illness and often this spreads quickly amongst other pupils in the same class. However, we also know that since schools have taken a tougher stance on the authorisation of holidays during term-time the number of pupils reporting as ill has increased dramatically. When a parent contacts a school to report an absence of a child, if a school accepts illness as the reason for the absence then the school is deemed to have accepted and approved the absence. As a measure to reduce the growing number of reported illness absences schools have been asked to consider challenging the reason for absence where there are patterns of similar absence i.e., regular Monday's or Friday's recorded as being ill or by asking for medical evidence for reasons of illness that are regular or recurring. By robustly challenging absence more, whilst maintaining a sympathetic and empathetic view on those genuinely presenting as being ill, it is hoped attendance can improve further.
11. The Education Welfare Service continues to work closely with both schools and parents to identify the cause of individual pupil absence with the aim of early intervention when and where needed. Schools are encouraged to correctly code absences to allow for effective data tracking. Regular meetings are scheduled between Education Welfare Officers and key school staff to discuss individual pupil cases and provide advice, support and to determine appropriate course of actions. Education Welfare Officers will often attend at the home of the pupil to make enquiries as to the reason for the absence from school in an effort to assist and facilitate an early return to school and discuss with parents various strategies to encourage and improve regular attendance.

Fixed Penalty Notices

12. Where the examples described above have been unsuccessful the Council has the available option of issuing parents with a fixed penalty notice or the commencement of prosecution via Court. Having undertaken an exercise to evaluate the effectiveness of fixed penalty

notices and Court action in terms of whether this improves attendance, the evidence clearly demonstrates an increase in attendance in nearly all instances. In a number of cases attendance was seen to rise by 40-50 percentage points per pupil.

13. For the current academic year to date 74 fixed penalty notices have been issued. A total of 73 penalty notices were issued during the 2015/16 academic year. Of the 73 penalty notices issued last year 20 resulted in action being taken via Court for non-payment. The 74 penalty notices issued during the autumn term 2016/17 have either been paid in full or currently the majority are still within the time limit to allow for payment. Court action is currently being pursued in one case for non-payment.
14. Members will continue to be provided with regular reports on pupil attendance and the work being undertaken to improve the operation of the Education Welfare Service during the autumn term.

Financial Impact

15. There is no financial impact associated with this proposal.

Equality Impact Assessment

16. Having considered the Council's screening assessment guidance produced to assist the Council in discharging its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 it has been determined that this report does not require an equalities impact assessment.

Workforce Impacts

17. There are no workforce or staffing issues directly associated with this report.

Legal Impacts

18. There is no legal impact associated with this report.

Risk Management

19. Members have previously determined that they wish to include the monitoring of pupil attendance as a regular activity within their on-going work programme. Such scrutiny maintains a high-level focus on attendance amongst schools within the County Borough whilst

comparing internal pupil attendance with that of other Authorities across Wales.

Consultation

20. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

21. That Members note the contents of this report.

Appendices

22. Appendix A: List of schools with individual attendance rates.

List of Background Papers

23. None.

Officer Contact

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APPENDIX A

Primary Schools	To 31/12/16	To 31/12/15	
Blaengwrach Primary	95.30%	95.97%	-0.67%
Blaenhonddan Primary	95.41%	95.92%	-0.51%
Bryncoch CIW Primary	94.48%	95.74%	-1.26%
Brynhyfryd Primary	91.98%	94.15%	-2.17%
Catwg Primary	94.47%	96.61%	-2.14%
Central Primary	94.70%	94.88%	-0.18%
Cilffriw Primary	95.62%	94.62%	1.00%
Coed Hirwaun Primary	96.18%	96.41%	-0.23%
Coedffranc Primary	94.84%	94.63%	0.21%
Creunant Primary	96.02%	96.17%	-0.15%
Croeserw Primary	94.79%	95.44%	-0.65%
Crymlyn Primary	95.47%	96.78%	-1.31%
Crynallt Primary	94.48%	95.04%	-0.56%
Cwmafan Primary	94.06%	94.90%	-0.85%
Cwmnedd Primary	94.66%	94.55%	0.12%
Cymer Afan Primary	94.98%	94.23%	0.75%
Eastern Primary	93.45%	95.66%	-2.21%
Glyncorrwg Primary	96.01%	95.92%	0.09%
Gnoll Primary	94.27%	94.85%	-0.58%
Godre'rgraig Primary	94.51%	94.79%	-0.28%
Groes Primary	94.82%	94.72%	0.10%
Llangiwr Primary	94.68%	95.34%	-0.66%
Llansawel Primary*	93.42%	93.58%	-0.16%
Maesmarchog Primary	97.05%	95.73%	1.32%
Melin Primary	94.29%	95.13%	-0.84%
Pen Afan Primary	93.86%	95.01%	-1.15%
Rhos Primary	95.59%	96.75%	-1.17%
Rhydyfro Primary	93.85%	94.75%	-0.89%
Sandfields Primary	93.97%	94.70%	-0.73%
St Joseph's Infant	94.35%	95.42%	-1.08%
St Joseph's Junior	95.51%	96.80%	-1.29%
St Joseph's Primary	94.88%	95.97%	-1.10%
St Therese's Primary	94.44%	95.58%	-1.13%
Tairgwaith Primary	95.08%	94.85%	0.22%
Tonnau Primary	94.03%	95.97%	-1.93%
Tywyn Primary	95.47%	94.97%	0.49%
Waunceirch Primary	94.52%	94.52%	0.00%
YGG Blaendulais	96.00%	96.32%	-0.32%
YGG Castell-nedd	95.13%	95.40%	-0.27%
YGG Cwmllynfell	94.12%	94.99%	-0.86%
YGG Cwmnedd	94.94%	94.70%	0.24%
YGG GCG	95.01%	96.95%	-1.93%
YGG Pontardawe	95.12%	95.18%	-0.06%
YGG Rhosafan	95.00%	95.45%	-0.45%
YGG Trebannws	96.00%	94.97%	1.03%
YGG Tyle'r Ynn	95.22%	95.75%	-0.53%
YGG Y Wern	95.40%	95.56%	-0.16%
Ynysfach Primary	94.73%	95.73%	-0.99%

Ynysmaerdy Primary	94.97%	95.73%	-0.77%
Ysgol Bae Baglan	94.06%	94.03%	0.02%
Neath Port Talbot	94.83%	95.29%	-0.46%

*Includes Traveller Unit

Schools	To 31/12/16	To 31/12/15	
Cefn Saeson	93.56%	94.58%	-1.02%
Cwmtawe	93.85%	94.46%	-0.61%
Cymer Afan	93.01%	92.43%	0.58%
Dwr y Felin	93.88%	94.56%	-0.68%
Dyffryn School	92.81%	94.31%	-1.50%
Llangatwg	93.29%	93.73%	-0.44%
St Joseph's RC	92.29%	92.53%	-1.34%
Ysgol Bae Baglan	91.96%	92.81%	-0.85%
Ystalyfera	95.05%	94.96%	0.09%
Neath Port Talbot	93.36%	94.05%	-0.69%