

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

17th January, 2019

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 and persistent absenteeism.

Background

2. a) This report provides Members with details of the latest available attendance data to end of December, 2018.
b) The report also provides Members with more detailed information and analysis of persistent absenteeism in schools.

Attendance Data

3. In the current academic year to the end of December the primary sector attendance rate was 94.43%. This is a -0.32% decrease compared to the same period the previous year. The Secondary sector attendance during this period was 93.17%. This is a -0.20% decrease compared to the same period the previous year.

4. During the year to date 21 primary schools increased their attendance compared with the same period last year, with 36 schools reporting a decrease. In the secondary sector 6 schools increased their attendance with 5 reporting a decrease. [Note: for the purpose of statistical reporting, the data for Ysgol Bae Baglan, Ysgol Cwm Brombil and Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera - Bro Dur as all-through schools have been disaggregated into both the primary and secondary sectors.] A list of the individual school data comparing the two academic years to date is provided in Appendix A to this report.
5. 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. 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. Education Welfare Officers will also challenge Headteacher's where attendance is a cause of concern across the school.
6. The majority of schools are now fully operating the recommended Neath Port Talbot Attendance Policy and are proactive with first day response and sending warning letters to parents for non-attendance. There remains some further work required at a small number of schools to ensure the policy is applied across the County Borough consistently.
7. Whilst the focus on pupil attendance generally revolves around absence from school rather than actual attendance, it is worthy for Members to note that there were 867 pupils who attended school 100% of the time for the whole of the 2017/18 academic year (excluding Nursery and Reception pupils). Additionally, some 8,834 pupils regularly attended school for more than 95% of the time over the year.
8. 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.

Persistent Absenteeism

9. Members will be aware from previous reports that the authority has made additional investment in tackling persistent absenteeism as an identified priority area in terms of: a) highlighting this as a relatively new focal point for schools and EWOs, b) the subsequent appointment

of a dedicated EWO officer to address persistent absenteeism following the success of the project pilot trial and, c) the emerging picture nationally driven by Estyn.

10. Persistent absence is defined by Welsh Government as pupils whose attendance level is less than 80% (20% or more absence). In Neath Port Talbot for the 2017/18 academic year this equated to 498 pupils.
11. Secondary Sector: For the academic year 2017/18, nationally 4.1% of all pupils in the secondary sector were defined as a persistent absentee. In Neath Port Talbot this figure was 4.2%, marginally higher than the national average. However, the amount of time those pupils lost from school in Neath Port Talbot has decreased to 20.6% whilst the national average has risen to 23%.
12. Primary Sector: For the academic year 2017/18 nationally 1.7% of all pupils in the primary sector were defined as a persistent absentee. In Neath Port Talbot this figure was the same at 1.7%. The amount of time these pupils lost from school in Neath Port Talbot was 8.1%, which again was lower than the national average of 9.1%. For the past five years Neath Port Talbot has excelled in this area repeatedly performing better than the national average despite its demographic.
13. In efforts to address persistent absenteeism further a particular focus of the Education Welfare Service this academic year is the individual monthly tracking of all 498 pupils defined as a persistent absentee during last academic year. Tracking will continue for the whole year with targeted additional intervention by the dedicated EWO supporting persistent absentees together with the named school EWO.
14. Work has already taken place to understand why the attendance of each of the 498 pupils was at a level low enough to categorise them as a persistent absentee. Examples include (but not exhaustive) illness (both intermittent and one-off long-term), traveller pupils, permanent exclusions and pupils who refuse to attend school regularly for a variety of reasons.
15. Action plans have been drawn up by the EWO service specifying how each of the pupils will be monitored, supported or requiring any other appropriate intervention, including whether prosecution is necessary to secure a better attendance.
16. Examples of such support provided to date include the EWO attending the home of school phobics each morning to travel with them to provide reassurance and support as they arrive at school and ensure they settle in for the day; officers directly contacting other professional

agencies in the attempt to remove a delay or blockage in the child being seen by them; alerting schools to issues or concerns that the child or parent had that prevented attendance that were not known to the school and the initiating of multi-agency professional meetings to bring a holistic approach to a child/family where there appear to be multiple issues affecting regular attendance.

17. Based upon the autumn term alone positive results in terms of pupil attendance are being seen from approximately two-thirds of the tracked pupils. Work with these pupils will continue throughout the academic year.
18. Members need to be aware that whilst there are some significant improvements and achievements being made amongst this group of pupils, the focus on individual pupils' absences has resulted in a few parents making the decision to de-register their child from school in favour of educating them at home. Whilst this is a perfectly legal choice for parents a small number of parents have been honest enough to say that their decision to home educate is as a direct result of the challenge placed upon them to improve their child's attendance. Parents who educate their children at home are supported by the Authority's Elective Home Education Co-ordinator. Where it is clear no education is taking place legal action is available to the authority to require the child to attend school.

Financial Impact

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

Equality Impact Assessment

20. 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

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

Legal Impacts

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

Risk Management

23. 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

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

Recommendations

25. That Members note the contents of this report.

Appendices

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

List of Background Papers

27. None.

Officer Contact

28. John Burge, Manager of the School & Family Support Team

Tel: 763599 Email: j.burge@npt.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

Abbey Primary	94.25%	0.34%
Alderman Davies CIW	95.45%	-0.55%
Alltwen Primary	95.08%	-0.43%
Awel y Môr	93.93%	-0.62%
Baglan Primary	93.91%	-0.99%
Blaenbaglan Primary	94.63%	0.03%
Blaendulais Primary	93.30%	-1.30%
Blaengwrach Primary	95.48%	0.10%
Blaenhoddan Primary	96.00%	0.61%
Bryncoch CIW Primary	95.86%	0.40%
Catwg Primary	95.02%	0.69%
Central Primary	94.42%	-0.31%
Cilfrw Primary	94.67%	0.34%
Coed Hirwaun Primary	95.03%	-1.20%
Coedffranc Primary	93.58%	-1.19%
Creunant Primary	94.58%	-1.49%
Croeserw Primary	93.37%	-0.53%
Crymlyn Primary	94.40%	-0.66%
Crynallt Primary	94.05%	-0.15%
Cwmafan Primary	94.53%	0.41%
Cwmnedd Primary	93.20%	-0.50%
Cymer Afan Primary	95.56%	-0.49%
Eastern Primary	94.39%	0.68%
Glyncorwg Primary	96.21%	0.46%
Gnoll Primary	93.99%	-0.36%
Godrergraig Primary	95.23%	1.13%
Llangiwig Primary	94.90%	1.04%
Maesmarchog Primary	95.06%	-1.01%
Melin Primary	94.57%	0.33%
Penafan Primary	89.76%	-3.73%
Rhos Primary	95.13%	1.07%
Rhydyfro Primary	95.51%	-0.16%
Sandfields Primary	92.73%	-2.02%
St Joseph's Infant	95.16%	0.59%
St Joseph's Junior	94.93%	-0.15%
St Joseph's Primary	94.27%	-0.38%
St Therese's Primary	93.12%	-2.01%
Tairgwaith Primary	94.84%	0.90%
Tonnau Primary	94.69%	-0.90%
Tywyn Primary	94.77%	-0.69%
Wauanceirch Primary	93.74%	-0.06%
YGG Blaendulais	95.33%	0.32%
YGG Castell-nedd	95.08%	-0.54%
YGG Cwmllynfell	94.07%	-1.61%
YGG Cwmnedd	94.42%	0.14%
YGG GCG	95.36%	-0.90%
YGG Pontardawe	95.55%	-0.41%
YGG Rhosafan	94.44%	-0.38%
YGG Trebannws	95.66%	0.90%
YGG Tyle'r Ynn	95.62%	0.34%
YG Ystalyfera - Bro Dur	93.34%	-1.96%
Ynysfach Primary	94.95%	-0.21%
Ysgol Bae Baglan	92.13%	-1.98%
Ysgol Carreg Hir	91.14%	-1.74%
Ysgol Cwm Brombil	93.34%	-0.32%
Ysgol Maes Y Coed	90.90%	1.23%
Ysgol Hendrefelin	84.23%	-5.42%

Cefn Saeson	91.53%	-2.57%
Cwmtawe	94.40%	0.13%
Cymer Afan	91.05%	-2.01%
Dwr y Felin	92.84%	-1.12%
Llangatwg	93.33%	0.03%
St Joseph's RC	93.10%	1.07%
Ysgol Bae Baglan	92.64%	0.04%
Ysgol Cwm Brombil	93.85%	0.44%
YG Ystalyfera - Bro Dur	93.62%	-0.49%
Ysgol Maes Y Coed	87.33%	-0.94%
Ysgol Hendrefelin	86.18%	2.27%