



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Culture Cabinet Board

12th September, 2019

Report of the Head of Transformation – Andrew Thomas

Matter for Information

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: PUPIL ATTENDANCE UPDATE

Purpose of the Report:

To provide Members with information and data in relation to Neath Port Talbot pupil attendance

Executive Summary:

Pupil Attendance in the primary sector decreased by 0.1% last academic year, whilst pupil attendance in the secondary sector increased by 0.1% over the same period. Neath Port Talbot's ranked position across Wales for secondary sector attendance has improved to 18th place.

Background:

- a) This report provides Members with details of the attendance data for the academic year 2018/19.
- b) The report also provides Members with more information of the work of the Education Welfare Service.

Attendance Data for 2018/19 Academic Year

For the academic year 2018/19 the primary sector attendance rate was 94.0%. This was a -0.1% decrease compared to the previous academic year 2017/18. The Secondary sector attendance during the year was 93.3%, an increase of 0.1% compared to the previous academic year.

Welsh Government have, in the past fortnight, released the all Wales attendance data for the secondary sector for 2018/19. This release shows an improvement in Neath Port Talbot's ranked position to 18th place.

It is worth noting that across Wales the average attendance rate amongst the secondary sector has remained stationary at 93.8% for two consecutive years, following two previous years where it fell. For the academic year 2018/19 Neath Port Talbot was one of only eight local authorities across Wales that saw its attendance rate increase.

The all Wales statistical release for the primary sector will not be available until later in the autumn term.

Work of the Education Welfare Service

On a number of occasions when presenting Members with this regular pupil attendance update report Members have acknowledged and commended the work of the Education Welfare Service. Members recognised some time ago that analysing and responding to data is just one means of addressing attendance of pupils in our schools. Pupil welfare issues are of equal importance to the service, if not greater in some instances, and whilst individual cases of success have a lower impact on the overall headline attendance data, positive change and success brings significant improvement in the lives of those pupils the service works with; many of whom are our most vulnerable.

Members have previously asked for more information and focus on the work of the Education Welfare Service; therefore, below is a precis of case examples of involvement of Education Welfare Officers. For confidentiality purposes individual names and schools have been omitted.

Pupil A, Secondary school pupil

The parents of Pupil A were at risk of prosecution for historical irregular and poor attendance. Following a number of letters, home visits and discussions by the Education Welfare Officer to get to know the family, Pupil A finally revealed that he was being bullied outside of school by a group of youths who were also pupils of the same school. Pupil A was afraid to attend school in case he came into contact with his bullies.

The Education Welfare Officer linked with the local PCSO in an attempt to resolve the bullying issues which were spilling into school. As a result of this intervention Pupil A's attendance has soared from low 70% to 100%. The threat of prosecution has been withdrawn.

Pupil B, Primary school pupil

Pupil B had recently moved to the area from away. As part of the pupil transition process information had been gathered that Pupil B had previously been on the child protection register. As Pupil B had not been seen in school for a few days the Education Welfare Officer made a home visit to make enquiries regarding the absence. A baby could be seen through the front window of the house watching television in a high chair and the younger 4 year old sibling was leaning out of an upstairs window. Knocking loudly on the door and trying to get the nursery child to come down from the window and wake the parents failed, therefore, the Education Welfare Officer called the Police and Social Services who broke into the house to find the parents in bed together asleep under the influence of drugs.

Pupil C, Secondary school pupil

Pupil C was a school refuser and mother was ineffective at ensuring regular school attendance. The Education Welfare Service took the parent to Court three times with each sentence increasing in severity. After the third occasion and the threat of a period in prison hung over the parent, attendance improved dramatically to circa 95%.

Upon Pupil C receiving her final GCSE results both the mother and pupil went onto the Education Welfare Officer to thank her for her intervention and not giving up on the family and how in retrospect they realised that the interventions from the Education Welfare Service and prosecutions had enabled the pupil to achieve 5+ GCSE's all Grade C. Pupil C is now studying further education at college.

Pupils D, E, F, G, H and I, Six children aged 3-15 from same family

The children moved to the area from England to live with dad having been on the child protection register for neglect whilst living with mum. There were complex issues surrounding the children and concerns around health, emotional needs, trauma and a lack of education. The family were living in temporary accommodation.

Robust multi-agency working took place to support the family and in an attempt to keep the children together. Priority was given to settle into a permanent home in order to have a stable base to work from so arrangements could be made for education, health visitors, GP etc.

Once housing was secured the Education Welfare Officer was able to work with the family to ensure the children were able to attend school. As dad had some basic skills difficulties the Education Welfare Officer assisted him to complete the relevant admission application forms and directed him to FSM and school uniform grant assistance for support.

One of the younger children had never been to playgroup or nursery. The Education Welfare Officer worked with the school to create a programme to allow the child to attend some open sessions to support a positive start, followed by more structural part-time half-day attendance, before gradually increasing to full-time attendance. School uniform was sourced by the Education Welfare Officer. Several other of the children commenced their schools on part-time timetables. Co-ordinated support by the Education Welfare Officer has been provided by a number of other services both internally and external to the Council.

One of the older children has ADHD and complex anger issues. He refused to attend school having found he struggled amongst his peers. The Education Welfare Officer referred the child to support services, gathered educational information and behavioural plans from the previous school to support a referral to the Intervention Support Panel where she attended to give evidence that secured an admission at one of our specialist placement centres for formal assessment.

The older of the children was a young carer, caring for her youngest sibling since birth. He had complex emotional needs and secured a place at a special school. The Education Welfare Officer worked with the outreach worker on a twice weekly basis and has acted as the link officer with CAHMS and assigned Counsellor.

The outcome for the family included: Permanent housing; de-registration of all children from the child protection register in place of being managed under a care and support status; all children have access to appropriate education and further evidence is being gathered to assess for additional learning needs; health needs are being met.

Pupil J, primary school pupil

Pupil J had not been attending school for a few days and there had been no contact made by the family explaining why. There were

already some low level welfare concerns surrounding the family so the Education Welfare Officer decided to make a home visit to check on Pupil J.

During the visit the Education Welfare Officer learnt that dad had recently lost his job and mother had recently experienced some health issues restricting her from working. The family had very limited food and had run out of electricity that morning.

The Education Welfare Officer linked in with the local Church/Food Bank on behalf of the family and with their agreement made an immediate referral to Social Services who went on to support the family.

Note: It should be credited that other services both within and external to the Council were involved in a number of the above cases.

Financial Impacts:

No implications

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for monitoring / information purposes only.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications

Workforce Impacts:

No implications

Legal Impacts:

No implications

Risk Management Impacts:

No implications

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this update report

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

None

Officer Contact:

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