

Children, Young People and Education Committee
Request for information on Pupil attendance & training for school
governors Response from: Torfaen County Borough Council



TCBC response to the request for information regarding:

Pupil attendance & training for school governors

05/01/2022

Please can you provide us with:

- information about how you are you working with schools to monitor and improve the attendance of pupils who have not returned to school since the two periods of general school closures, have done so on a very limited basis, or have been regularly/persistently absent: and
- any data you hold on the numbers and absence rates of these pupils?

Response

All pupils were identified who had not returned to school following the initial and second lockdown periods of school closures since the full reopening of schools in September 2020, liaising with school staff to address the area of need, contacting parents & pupils to determine the reasons and aiding all parties involved to ensure a provision has been identified that is suitable and appropriate to the need of the pupil.

Following the initial shut March 2020 to July 2020 the EWS carried out the following: -

- We met with the schools on a regular basis following the first lock down and discussing with them all children under 95% in Primary Schools and 90% in Secondary Schools with the odd exception where we had to lower the threshold. We recorded all discussions on the Record of Consultation Sheet (ROC). The Record of Consultation document was introduced in 2010 to schools as a way of recording pupils whose attendance and punctuality is of concern. This information will include what actions are to be taken and by whom, therefore the ownership of the document lies solely with the school, however we advise and support the school during these discussions.
- The ROC was devised to be used from the start of the academic year as an accumulative document, to illustrate the discussions and subsequent actions taken by school-based staff and the EWS in addressing areas of concern relating to school attendance.
- The expectation remains, and it is good practice, that schools update the information on a regular basis in between the pre-arranged meetings with the EWO to ensure that actions are taken in a timely manner in order to improve pupil attendance at school.
- Schools are responsible for compiling and updating the information as necessary, whilst the EWS provides advice on a case by case basis.
- The information is readily available, and school do not have to go through the case history again. You can easily monitor what actions have been taken and by whom to determine the next steps following the Strive for 95 which is our internal process for monitoring attendance which clearly outlines the school's responsibilities before referring to the EWS.

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- The Strive for 95 Attendance Framework provides a clear consistent approach for all Torfaen schools to adhere to in addressing attendance concerns, we will continue to use this approach.
- If the school cannot not contact the parent after 3 days, the schools will request a home visit from the EWS. In most cases a home visit was not necessary as we managed to speak to the parents on the phone and feed the conversation back to the school to pick up with the parents.
- In the event that school had contacted the family and appropriate referrals to other agencies had been made whilst the child still was not attending school then a referral was made to the EWS. We would then arrange a meeting via the phone or Teams to discuss the reasons why the child has not returned to school and support the parents to encourage them to do so.
- We made appropriate Safeguarding and Child Protection referrals where we had concerns.
- The Welsh Government Guidance stated that punitive measures were not to take place for absence related to Covid, as a result no warning were issued, and no prosecutions took place.
- It was noted that some of the families whose children had not previously attended since March 2020 advised that their child return to school in September.
- The EWS regularly liaised with all schools as to updated WG Guidance in terms of Attendance, ensuring schools adhere to the amended Attendance codes since the start of the Outbreak to ensure that attendance returns have been accurate and to identify any safeguarding concerns from the school registers. Reminding schools of their responsibility in maintaining regular contact with those pupils who are not attending school/accessing blended learning as a result of medical issues to ensure that wellbeing check ins remain in place and to ensure the pupil does not feel further isolated from staff.
- September 2020 to October 2020 and then September 2020 to December 2020 we asked for a list of the children on 0% and enquired with the school what action had been taken to encourage the children to return to school.
- Where some pupils were not be able to return to school, the school was aware of this and therefore coded the absence appropriately for example for blended learning.
- Schools sent letters, text messages and e-mails to those who could not be contacted by phone.
- School and the EWO spoke to other services involved with the family to ask if they can ask the parents to contact the school or the EWO and when they last saw the child.
- Home visits were carried out by the EWS in cases of non-engagement with the school.
- Schools and the EWS established with families the reasons why they were not sending their child back to school, as a result of this plans were put in place for the child's return to school or blended learning put in place.
- The school and the EWS explained to parents that every school should continue to be "Covid Protected" - having carried out risk assessments and mitigated them with a combination of controls such as hand and surface hygiene, one-way systems and so forth.
- Meetings were arranged with schools via teams or a conference call as this was the most successful and safe way of meeting with parents.
- Referrals were made for the child/family to the appropriate mental health services to deal with any form of anxiety or who need support.

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- In the event of a family’s refusal to return their child to school despite all avenues of support explored with the family and the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development therefore requiring a referral being made to Social Care.
- Schools were aware that they must engage with parents/carers to understand why they are not attending and ensure there are not any concerns about their well-being or alternative support options that could be arranged to enable the pupils to attend.
- The school and EWS reviewed the situation with the learner and parents or carers on a regular basis to avoid any prolonged absence.
- We compiled a report in July 21 of all those children who still had not returned to school since Easter providing information on how each child is being supported to return to school or if they are unable to return to school how they are being supported to work from home. Every child was either being supported by the school, EWS and other internal or external agencies.

Comprehensive	29
Primary	14

The EWS amended current working practices to provide additional support to schools, pupils & Families following the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. Such measures to date include.

- The introduction of an additional referral pathway for schools in assisting communication, & engagement of pupils in accessing home learning and aiding school staff with regular wellbeing check ins with pupils & Parents via Covid Communication Requests.

Since the last school closures December 2020 to March 2021 we continued in the same way as above until the Autumn term of 2021 as a response to the evolving situation affecting schools in their capacity to address long-term pupil absenteeism, the EWS propose amending current working practices to undertake additional home visit welfare checks. Initially this was in respect of pupils whose attendance had fallen below 10% in the first instance, however this was increased to pupils with less than 30% attendance as part of a graduated response. The purpose of the visits was to check the physical wellbeing of the pupil, to discuss reasons for absence with the Pupil and Parent and to understand the factors affecting a full reintegration back into education. This was deemed to be a priority in line with Torfaen’s safeguarding protocol and acted as a catalyst for further dialogue between home and school.

 The table below illustrates the number of pupils of concern across all Torfaen schools.

Number of pupils below % Attendance Sept - 21.10.21

Comprehensive	less than 80%	less than 50%	less than 30%	less than 10%
Total Number of pupils	1615	251	114	56

Primary	less than 80%	less than 50%	less than 30%	less than 10%
Total number of pupils	1075	70	16	11

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We continue to work in partnership with the schools in providing support, guidance and intervention in respect of cases of concern where school attendance remains an issue.

During these times a multi-agency approach is critical and if the school has any concerns about the harm, neglect or abuse of learners this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Person who will liaise with children’s services and other agencies as appropriate.

There is ongoing multiagency partnership collaboration with schools, agencies, departments for appropriate provision to be implemented for pupils, including.

- Additional Learning Needs team
- Education Psychologists
- Outreach
- CAMHs
- Social Care
- Families First
- Space wellbeing referrals for mental health support
- Mental Health in Reach Practitioners
- Pupil Referral Unit

Attendance % analysis all Torfaen Schools From 02/09/21 to 17/12/21 Reception to Year 6 Primaries & Years 7 to Year 11 Comprehensives

Name of School	Pupils with attendance <50%	Pupils with attendance <60%	Pupils with attendance <70%	Pupils with attendance <80%
Blaenavon Primary	7	12	24	77
Cwmffrwdroer Primary	2	7	12	40
Garnteg Primary	4	5	18	46
George Street Primary	2	8	19	56
Griffithstown Primary	4	8	22	52
New Inn Primary	3	5	17	50
Penygarn Primary	1	5	23	52
Ponthir Primary	0	0	1	2
Pontnewydd Primary	4	8	17	40
St David's Primary	0	1	1	2
Maendy	2	2	6	20
Coed Eva	6	10	21	54
Nant Celyn	3	5	20	50
Greenmeadow	3	7	13	21
Blenheim Road	2	4	14	37
Henllys	0	0	0	9
Woodlands	0	1	3	21
Ysgol Bryn Onnen	2	2	4	15
YGC	2	2	12	28
Ysgol Panteg	0	1	7	25
Padre Pio	3	4	5	18
Our Ladies	0	2	6	24
Llantarnam	1	1	3	8
Croesyceiliog	1	5	19	44
Llanyravon	1	4	9	26
Crownbridge	5	17	11	21
TOTAL NO	58	126	307	838

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Name of School	Pupils with attendance <50%	Pupils with attendance <60%	Pupils with attendance <70%	Pupils with attendance <80%
West Mon	69	102	147	265
Abersychan	40	64	109	189
CH5	67	108	172	303
Croesyceiliog	54	75	122	224
YGG	13	19	37	84
St Albans High	13	17	39	93
TOTAL NO.	256	385	626	1158

Please can you provide us with information about the support you provide to school governors, including how you are encouraging school governors to take up Estyn's lay inspector training programme?

Response

The Local Authority's support to governors is provided in partnership with the Education Achievement Service (EAS). Support is delivered through the EAS Service Level Agreement (SLA) with schools which includes both support and access to professional learning from both the Governor Support Team and colleagues across the service. Professional Learning activity for governors has been offered virtually since June 2020, including all Welsh Government mandated training. A high-level summary of the regional approach and future planned developments are attached as a Word document, along with the full regional programme for Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022. In addition to this regional programme the LA delivers professional learning to governors in areas such as: Safeguarding, Finance and HR processes. This additional LA specific programme is also attached. The 'live' versions are accessible here on the EAS area of the Hwb platform: [Governor PL Programme.](#)



1a. - EAS Regional 1b. - EAS Governor EAS Governor
Governor PL Menu - SPL - Torfaen LA OfferSupport - PL - High Lr

Regarding the promotion of any information for Governors from Estyn or any other organisation, this would be done in partnership with the EAS. Any request to share useful information or opportunities with governors, would be promoted through the [EAS Supporting our schools Site - School Governance](#) and where urgent, backed up with an email to the approximately 3000 governors across the region. Similarly, where the EAS Governor Support Service had any enquiry from a Governor about the programme we would direct them to the Estyn page on the Lay Inspector role, which has more information: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/working-us/inspector-roles#layinspector>

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