

Committee: **Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **4th December 2019**

Report Subject: **School Attendance**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Joanne Collins, Executive Member for Education**

Report Submitted by: **Lynette Jones, Corporate Director of Education**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
14/11/19	19/11/19	20/11/19			04/12/19	18/12/19		

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide opportunity for Members to scrutinise attendance data for Blaenau Gwent at Primary and Secondary school level for the academic year 2018-19.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 This report will provide Scrutiny Members with key attendance data relating to Blaenau Gwent schools and relevant comparisons to family and regional LAs as well as all Wales data where available.
- 2.2 The key attendance guidance is the Welsh Government Guidance entitled: 'All Wales Attendance Framework' (November 2012). The document provides standards and guidance for practitioners to ensure greater consistency of practice throughout Wales. It also aims to enable the Education Welfare Service and schools to deliver services that are consistent, accessible and of a high standard. Most importantly it is intended to be a practical resource toolkit for use by staff working within the Education Welfare Service.
- 2.3 In order to fulfil its statutory duty, in December 2015, Blaenau Gwent revised its School Attendance Policy to make it fully compliant with legislation and incorporate the 'Callio' strategy, which had been introduced the previous academic year.
- 2.4 The Education Welfare Service works closely with schools and other services to promote the need for regular school attendance and to embed new working practices which support this aim.

2.5 In January 2018, registration audits were undertaken in all Secondary schools and in the River Centre and recommendations made to the schools. The recommendations made were to ensure that registers are marked consistently throughout Blaenau Gwent and to ensure that pupils educated off site were safeguarded appropriately.

2.6 In April 2018 reducing persistent absenteeism was made a corporate priority and a plan was put in place to address this.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

The options for Scrutiny to consider are:

3.1 **Option 1:** Members are asked to scrutinise the information detailed within the report, thereby contributing to the continuous self-evaluation of the service prior to making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Option 2: Accept the report as provided.

3.2

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Education Welfare Service supports the Corporate Plan priorities of Education, specifically to improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing through regular school attendance.

4.2 The Education Welfare Service also contributes to all five areas of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan. Promoting good attendance supports improved pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing of pupils, particularly our most vulnerable, enabling pupils to maximise their potential. Whilst being a statutory responsibility we also know that good attendance is a fundamental pre-requisite of ensuring future local and national prosperity through the provision of an informed and well-educated workforce.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no financial implications for the local authority related to this report.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is an ongoing need to improve school attendance so that pupils are attending school on a regular basis and are able to maximise their potential. Failure to ensure that there is robust monitoring of attendance in schools and of the quality of Council Services to support school improvement carries with it a number of significant risks:

- Undetected and unaddressed decline in school performance and the quality of provision;
- Students do not achieve to acceptable levels;
- Lack of overall improvement in schools' performance; and
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

5.2.1 Similarly, ineffective monitoring of Council Services also poses a range of risks including:

- Reducing standards and quality of provision in schools;
- Poor value for money;
- Ineffective support for schools which hinders their improvement;
- Negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

5.2.2 Attendance in all schools is monitored on a fortnightly basis by Officers working within the Education Welfare Service but based in each cluster. Support, advice and appropriate challenge is provided to all schools with bespoke support provided to schools with lower attendance. Specific areas of focus such as encouraging parents to make medical appointments out of school time, minimising the use of exclusions and working with schools regarding the use of reduced timetables continue alongside thorough data analysis to identify trends and areas of good practice.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications for this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct staffing implications associated with this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

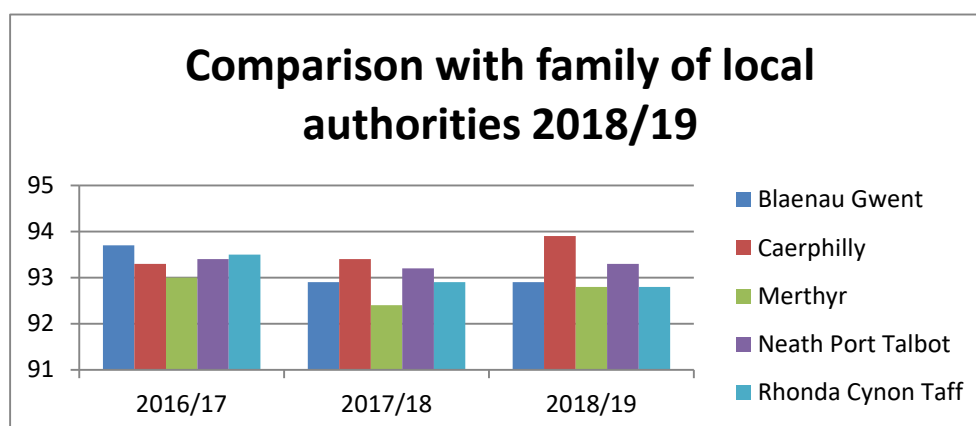
Since reporting to Scrutiny in October 2018 Welsh Government has released the statistical data for primary school attendance in 2017/18, persistent absenteeism in 2017/18 and secondary attendance in 2018/19. The statistical data for primary school attendance in 2018/19 will be released in January 2020 and persistent absenteeism in March 2020.

6.1.1 **Blaenau Gwent Secondary attendance over the last three years**

	Actual	Family	Wales
2016/17	93.7%	93.4%	94.1%
2017/18	92.9%	93.0%	93.8%
2018/19	92.9%	93.1%	93.8%

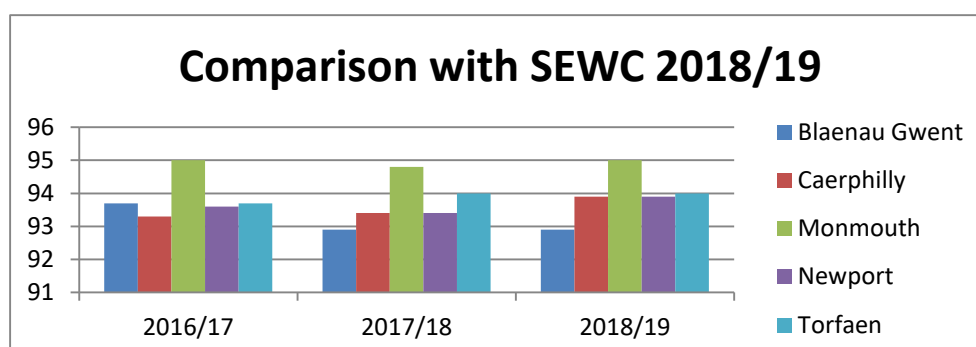
Secondary attendance in 2018/19 ranked 20th out of 21 in Wales. This is unchanged from 2017/18 when it also ranked 20th out of 21 in Wales.

The table below shows how Blaenau Gwent compares with its family of local authorities by percentage attendance:



In our family of local authorities, in 2016/17, Blaenau Gwent was ranked 1st out of 5 (where 1st is the highest performing LA). In 2017/18 we were joint second and in 2018/19 3rd out of 5 for Secondary school attendance.

The table below shows how Blaenau Gwent compares with the South East Wales Consortia by percentage attendance:



When compared to other authorities within SEWC we were ranked 5th out of 5 for Secondary school attendance which is the same as the previous year.

6.1.2 **Blaenau Gwent primary attendance over the last three years**

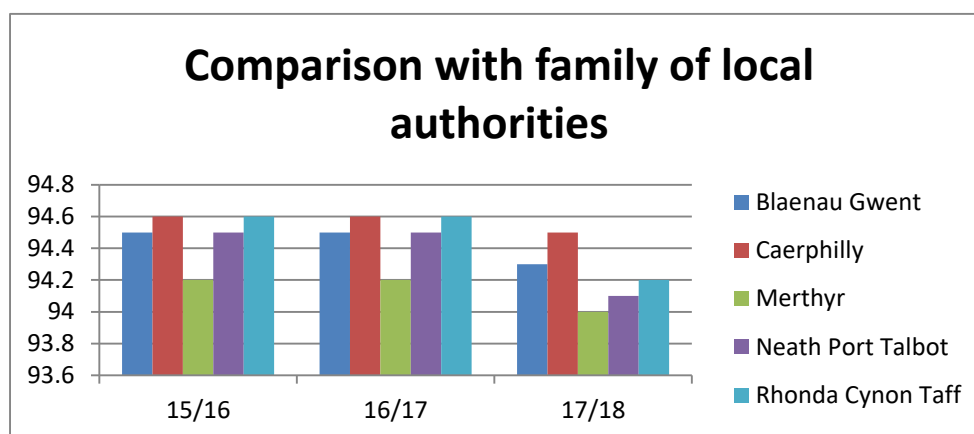
	Actual	Family	Wales
2015/16	94.5%	94.5%	94.9%
2016/17	94.5%	94.5%	94.9%
2017/18	94.3%	94.2%	94.5%

Whilst there has been a decline in attendance there has not been as great a decline as that across the rest of Wales.

Blaenau Gwent's primary attendance compared to the other 21 Welsh local authorities.

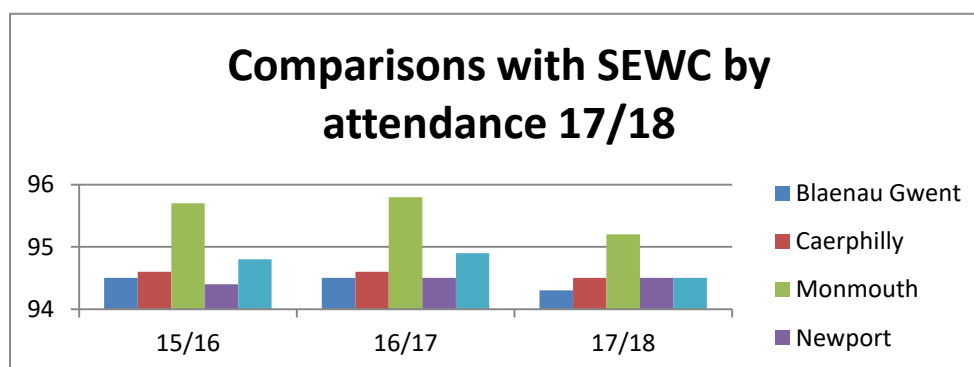
2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Joint 18th	Joint 20th	Joint 19th	18th

The table below shows how Blaenau Gwent compares with its family of local authorities by percentage attendance.



In 2015/16, Blaenau Gwent was ranked joint 3rd out of 5. In 2017/18, Blaenau Gwent was ranked joint 2nd out of 5 for primary school attendance.

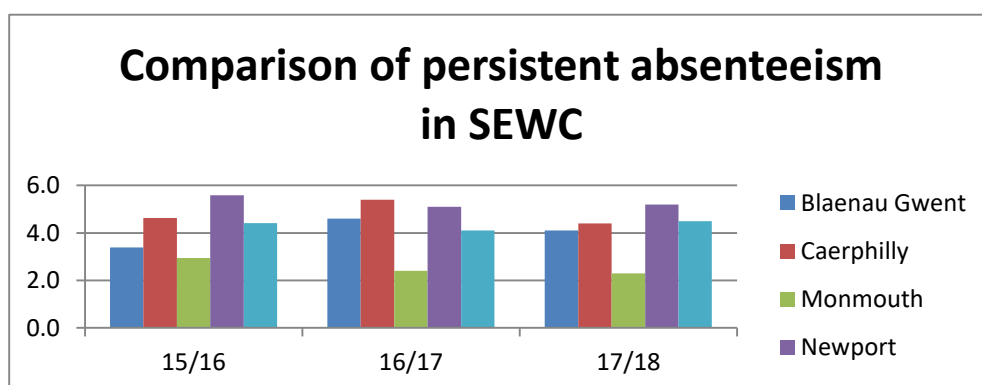
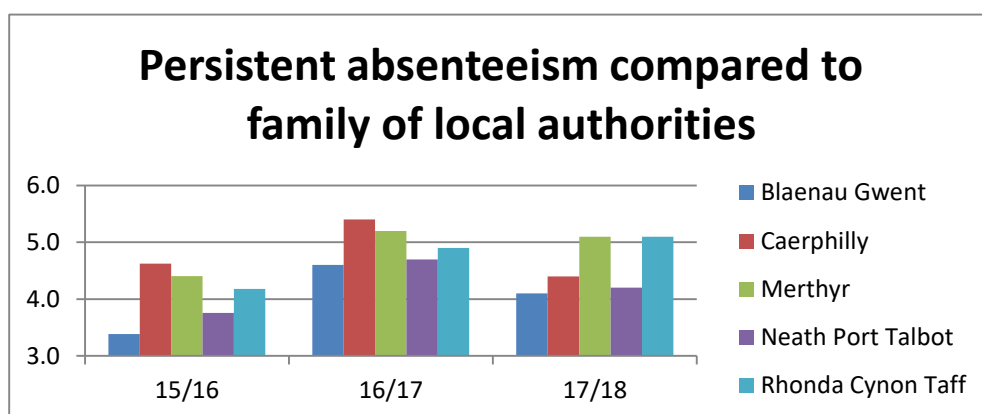
The table below shows how Blaenau Gwent compares with the South East Wales Consortia by percentage attendance.



When compared to other authorities within SEWC we were ranked 5th out of 5 for primary school attendance compared to joint 4th out of 5 the previous year.

6.1.3 **Blaenau Gwent's secondary persistent absentees over the last three years.**

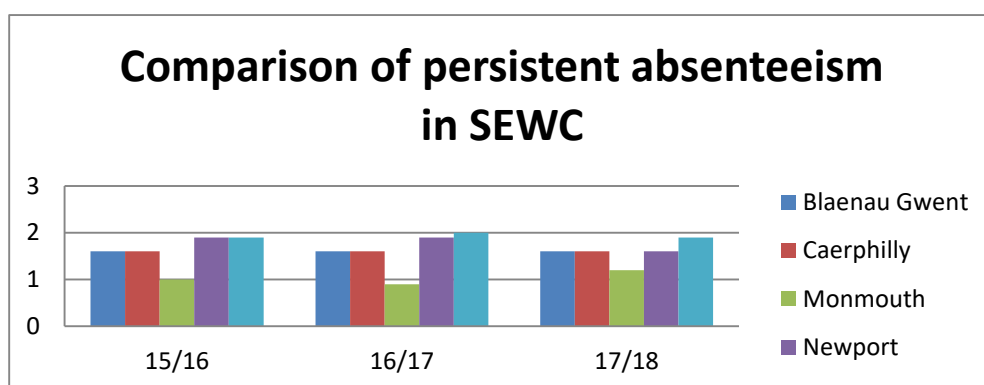
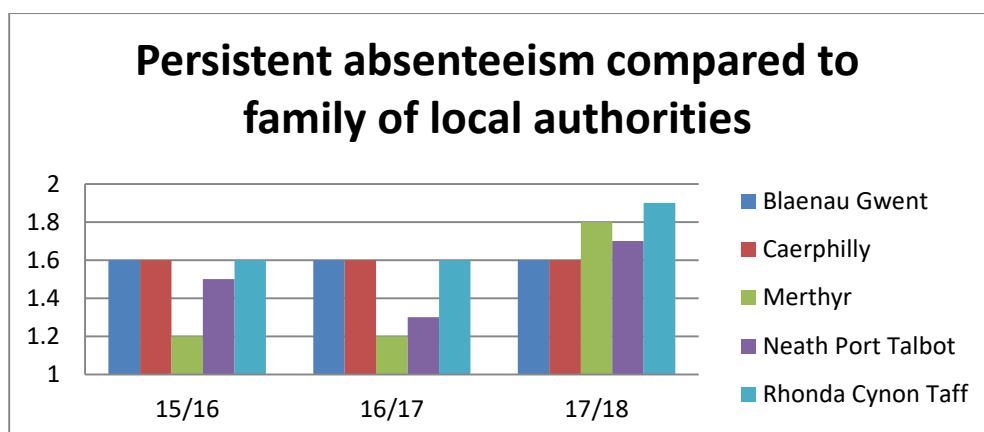
	Actual	Wales
2015/16	3.4%	3.9%
2016/17	4.6%	4.0%
2017/18	4.1%	4.1%



At the end of 2017/18 the percentage of Secondary pupils who were persistent absentees was 4.1% compared to 4.6% the previous year. This makes BG 1st in our family of local authorities, 2nd in SEWC and in line with the Welsh Average of 4.1%.

6.1.4 **Blaenau Gwent's primary persistent absentees over the last three years**

	Actual	Wales
2015/16	1.6%	1.5%
2016/17	1.6%	1.5%
2017/18	1.6%	1.7%



At the end of 2017/18 the percentage of primary pupils who were persistent absentees was 1.6% compared to 1.6% last year. This makes BG joint 1st compared to our family of local authorities and joint 2nd in the SEWC and above the Welsh Average of 1.5%.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Improved attendance will result in pupils being able to access an education which will support them to achieve better outcomes reducing the future financial implications on other services.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Attendance data is regularly shared with schools as well as forming a part of the evidence base for other teams' work within the Directorate, the EAS and other Services. A members briefing on the work of the Education Welfare Service is planned for the spring term.

6.4 ***Thinking for the long term (forward planning)***

A focus on improving school attendance aligns to the Directorate and Corporate Plan. Improved attendance levels will have a positive impact on the life chances of children and young people, better preparing them for their future beyond their time in school.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Good attendance reduces the likelihood of a pupil becoming NEET, increases the likelihood of a pupil achieving well and supports pupils to reach their potential. The work of the Education Welfare Service is preventative in nature

supporting pupils to engage in education and supporting schools in their management of attendance.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

Attendance has a regional profile and supports the work of the EAS. Strong links exist with neighbouring LAs as well as within Blaenau Gwent services such as with Children's Services. Working in partnership with other services is fundamental to providing a co-ordinated, effective service to children and young people as well as schools.

6.7 Integration(across service areas)

A focus on attendance impacts upon key objectives within Education as well as in work with Children's Services.

6.8 EqlA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)

There are no adverse impacts in relation to the data in this report.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

7.1 Attendance is monitored fortnightly and data shared with schools, on a half termly basis to the Departmental Management Team meeting as well as to the Inclusion team Monitoring, Evaluation and Review group and Wider Group with the EAS. Annual FADEs for primary and secondary attendance are prepared and data is provided to Welsh Government.

8. Background Documents /Electronic Links

The All Wales Attendance Framework is available from the Welsh Government: <https://beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/all-wales-attendance-framework.pdf>

List of Acronyms

EAS: Education Achievement Service
NEET: Young people not in education, employment or training
SEWC: South East Wales Consortium