

Committee: **Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **23rd March 2020**

Report Subject: **Educational Neglect Policy**

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) |
| 23/01/20 | ✓ | 07.03.20 | | | 23.03.20 | 22.04.20 | | |

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform members of the Committee about the Educational Neglect Policy prior to consideration for approval by the Executive Committee and adoption by the local authority and school governing bodies. This policy has been written to ensure that there is a consistent and joined up approach by Education and Children’s Services to address educational neglect.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Improving educational outcomes for our children and young people is a key priority for the Council. The links between poor attendance and attainment are compelling and the Council is aiming to address the root causes of non-attendance, one of these being, ‘safeguarding and long-term absence’.

2.2 The link between neglect and poor school attendance has been articulated in a number of recent reports. The Department for Education accepted a recommendation in 2012 that, ‘persistent failure to send children to school is a clear sign of neglect and that Children’s Services should work with schools to address underlying difficulties’.

2.3 In 2013, the NSPCC cited, ‘failure to ensure regular school attendance that prevents the child reaching their full potential academically’ (2) as one of their six forms of neglect.

2.4 Within the United States educational neglect is used to describe excessive unauthorised absence, failing to register for education or not supporting a child to get help for any special educational needs they are entitled to. The reporting of educational neglect is required as part of social services legislation in each school district in New York State.

2.5 Within Blaenau Gwent a number of young people who fail to attend school regularly are on the caseload of both Children's Services and the Education Welfare Service and it was felt that a collaborative approach was needed to address these pupils. The intention is not to necessarily increase the number of Children's Services referrals, rather, the purpose is to create a descriptor that highlights the critical educational and life implications relating to a child/young person that may not previously otherwise have been communicated. This is why it was agreed the 'education neglect' term should not be used unless a 12 month period has elapsed in which certain thresholds have been met.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 The options for Scrutiny to consider are:

3.2 **Option 1:** Consider the policy and provide challenge and/or further improvements for consideration.

Option 2: Accept the policy as drafted and recommend to the Executive Committee for approval.

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

4.1 ***Corporate Plan Priorities***

To improve pupil outcomes, progress and wellbeing, for all our pupils particularly for our more able and our most vulnerable learners.

4.2 ***Statutory Responsibilities***

To ensure that all pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually in accordance with the 1996 Education Act and 1989 Children Act

4.3 ***Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan***

To forge new pathways to prosperity - Good school attendance enables pupils to maximise their potential and obtain the highest possible outcomes. This is a fundamental pre-requisite of ensuring future local and national prosperity through the provision of an informed and well-educated workforce and society.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no financial implications for the local authority.

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.

- 5.2.1 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.
- 5.2.2 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; and
 - Negative impact on the reputation of the Council.

5.3 ***Legal***

To ensure that all pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually in accordance with the 1996 Education Act and 1989 Children Act

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There are no direct workforce implications for the local authority.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The statutory response from the Council regarding poor school attendance has been systematic and well evidenced.

- 6.1.1 There were 100 fixed penalty notices issued in 2017/18 and 41 prosecutions relating to school attendance.
- 6.1.2 There were 116 fixed penalty notices issued in 2018/19 and 80 prosecutions relating to school attendance.
- 6.1.3 When considering the data, the extent of re-offending and repeated court appearances regarding the same pupil and/or involving the same parents was considered of particular concern. This focused attention on those for whom behaviour was not changing over a period of time.
- 6.1.4 It was felt appropriate that it would be most useful to identify a term to characterise this neglect. The term 'educational neglect' was considered as being the most helpful, in that it could both support the narrative from professionals and simply convey to our school communities the level of concern the issue should invoke.

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

There will be less young people out of education which has immediate implications for the public with regards to ensuring young people are better

safeguarded but also long term implications as it is widely researched that young people out of education cost health, police and other agencies more financial implications in later years than young people in full time education.

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

In order to devise this policy, a task and finish group was established comprising representatives from the Education Inclusion Service, Safeguarding in Education and the Service Manager for Children's Services. This policy has also been shared with Secondary Attendance Forum, Schools, Education DMT and Children's Services DMT.

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

Improved attendance levels will have no negative impact in the long term. It will, however, ensure that young people attend school more often to improve attainment of young people which in the long term improve their life chances.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Routine monitoring of attendance and collaborative working will keep the focus on the need for regular school attendance and ensure that families are supported to achieve this. Improved attendance will prevent young people from becoming NEET.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

A regional approach to improving attendance is ongoing, involving the EAS and the five regional LAs.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

There is no direct impact in relation to an integrated approach however improvements in school attendance rates will prepare pupils for transition to adulthood reducing the effects of truancy.

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

An equality impact assessment has been completed and there are no adverse impacts in relation to the data contained in this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 This will be monitored termly through Education DMT and an annual report will also be provided as part of FADE reporting.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix A – Education Neglect Policy