



## EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 15TH JANUARY 2013

**SUBJECT: IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the progress being made in improving attendance in schools within the Borough.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The information contained in the National Statistics First Release *Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 2011/12*, published as SDR 159/2012, gives a national overview of secondary school attendance and absence rates - (to view data please refer to [www.statswales.wales.gov.uk](http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk)).
- 2.2 During the academic year 2011/12 there was an increase in both primary and secondary school attendance in comparison with 2010/11.
- 2.3 There is a strong correlation between poor attendance and those children and young people eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).
- 2.4 Improving attendance remains a priority for the LA.
- 2.5 14 secondary schools (100%) matched or exceeded their attendance from the previous year. The improvements in attendance within primary schools in Caerphilly have also been consistent over the past 3 years.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Promoting regular school attendance is a key component of the Welsh Government's aim to raise educational standards and to reduce the prospects of young people drifting into anti-social and criminal behaviour.
- 3.2 This report links directly with the Community Strategy, NEETS Strategy, Single Education Plan the Inclusion Strategy and Learning Education and Inclusion (LEI) Improvement Plan.
- 3.3 Attendance issues in the context of discriminatory bullying also links this report to the Strategic Equality Plan (Strategic Equality Objective 1).

## 4. THE REPORT

4.1 This report compares the performance of Caerphilly against all Welsh authorities and the national average and confirms that improvements in attendance in Caerphilly have been consistent over the past 4 years. The 2011/12 figure of 91.7% records an overall 1% increase in attendance, compared to the 0.2% increase in 2010/11.

4.2 LA officers now monitor exclusions on a monthly basis and contact schools to clarify any issues. Targeted interventions are agreed between the LA and the Education Achievement Service (EAS). The impact of this accelerated approach has been significant so far.

4.3 The statistical release reports that 21 out of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales, are recorded as having improved secondary school attendance for 2011/12 compared with 18 the previous year. The data also indicates that the LA was ranked joint 18<sup>th</sup> with Cardiff.

Whilst Caerphilly is reported as being 0.5% below the All Wales figure of 92.2% and remains a priority for improvement, records indicate that CCBC is improving at a higher rate than the Welsh Average; the All Wales improvement for 2011/12 was reported as 0.8%.

4.4 The information contained in Appendix 2 and 3 provides local secondary school data comparisons over 3 years for CCBC and confirms that:

- 14 schools (100%) matched or exceeded their attendance from the previous year;
- 10 schools (71%) matched or exceeded the Local Authority (LA) target of 91.7%, the Welsh Government (WG) target being 93%

4.5 The improvements in attendance within primary schools in Caerphilly have also been consistent over the past 3 years. Appendix 4 provides an overview of the local data and indicates that:

- 54 schools (72%) are recorded as having an improvement in attendance;
- 33 of schools (44%) matched or exceeded the LA target of 93.3%;
- for the academic year 2011/2012, there was an overall LA improvement of 0.4% in attendance, compared with 0.3% in 2010/11.

The national validated Primary data is due January 2013.

4.6 Appendix 4 provides a summary of attendance from both primary and secondary schools, broken down by gender and free school meal entitlement. The data indicates the significant effect deprivation has on attendance within the Borough and is more apparent at secondary level.

4.7 From 2006 and the amendment to the Education (School performance and Unauthorised Absences Targets) (Wales) Regulations 1999, the key performance indicator, relating to secondary school attendance, ceased to be the rate of unauthorised absence.

4.8 Since statistical releases from the WG continue to focus on both *unauthorised absence* and *all absence* rates the LA monitors both these issues in addition to actual attendance rates.

4.9 Types of Absences

All (or overall) absences comprise those which are authorised and unauthorised.

- an **authorised** absence is an absence with permission from a head teacher, teacher or other authorised representative of the school for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided.
- an **unauthorised** absence is an absence without the permission of a head teacher, teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes unexplained or unjustified absences.

For attendance purposes, it is worth noting that pupils undertaking approved and supervised educational activities conducted away from the school, remain on the roll of the school.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The LA is committed to ensuring that all children and young people gain maximum benefit from their education by regular attendance at school or otherwise, regardless of the individual or family characteristics of those children and young people.
- 5.2 The newly established discriminatory incident reporting system that all schools must complete termly, will help in the identification of possible causes of exclusions in minority groups.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses that are not reflected in this report as set out below.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 Improving attendance is a priority at both a national and local level.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 This report does not require the application of statutory powers.

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Background Papers:  
SDR 159/2012, Absenteeism from Secondary Schools in Wales, 20011/12 (to view data please refer to [www.statswales.wales.gov.uk](http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk)).

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Local Authority Secondary School comparisons 2008 – 2012
- Appendix 2 Local Individual School Comparative Data 2010/11 and 2011-12
- Appendix 3 Local Authority Primary School Comparisons 2009 – 2012
- Appendix 4 Local Authority Attendance Summary: Gender and FSM