



# Pembrokeshire County Council

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

## Attendance Strategy

2025 – 2027

*Securing successful outcomes and future pathways for the children and young people of Pembrokeshire*



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## 1. Introduction

Pembrokeshire has approximately 17,220 compulsory school aged children and young people on roll at our 62 schools across the County. When children and young people are in formal education, a high level of school attendance is essential to ensure they thrive academically and socially. Children who regularly miss school for unauthorised reasons often miss critical parts of the curriculum, this can increase the risk of falling behind their peers, and disengagement with education. Children can also become socially isolated when they miss out on shared learning and social experiences with their peers in school. Therefore, it is vitally important we ensure that all children in Pembrokeshire schools are making the most of their learning opportunities through regular attendance. Accessing education is identified under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** (UNCRC) in articles 28 and 29;

### **Article 28 - Right to education**

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

### **Article 29 - Goals of education**

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Evidence from [Estyn](#) suggests that there is a clear link between good educational attainment and high school attendance. Poor attendance at school has a detrimental effect on a child's learning and can have a huge impact on their wellbeing. We consider that positive school attendance is the key to raising standards of achievement, securing successful outcomes and future pathways for children and young people.

*"There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Research shows that missing 17 days of school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a GCSE grade across all subjects. In the workplace unauthorised absences would not be accepted and we need to help our children and young people to prepare for the workplace" - Estyn*

The report '[Improving Attendance at School](#)' carried out by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2010, explains there is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement of pupils who miss more than 50% of school, 3% manage to achieve 5 or more GCSE's at Grade A\* - C including Maths and English. It highlights that 73% of Pupils who have over 95% attendance achieve 5 or more GCSE's at Grades A\* - C.

The Local Authority is committed to maintaining consistent high levels of attendance at school and recognises that improving attendance is a crucial factor in maintaining standards of children's performance and achievement. We strive to ensure equality of educational opportunities for all children and young people.

It is not a legal requirement that children be educated at a school. The legal requirements on parents and carers in relation to the education of their children are set out in section 7 of the **Education Act 1996**. That section provides that every parent of every child of compulsory school age must ensure that he or she receives efficient full-time education at a school or otherwise. Parents may satisfy their duty under this section by providing efficient full-time education, suitable to the child (within the meaning of section 7), otherwise than at a school. The term '*otherwise than at a school*' is broad enough to encompass Elective Home Education.

Regular school attendance is vital for children and young people, failure to attend school increases the risk of leaving school without qualification and allows greater opportunity for young people to be drawn into crime and antisocial behaviour. It can also leave some young people vulnerable to harm by adults.

## 2. National Context

The Welsh Government Guidance document, [Inclusion and Pupil Support 2016](#), provides advice and guidance and sets out responsibilities for maintaining high levels of attendance, positive behaviour and well-being of all pupils.

The [All Wales Attendance Framework](#) provides a toolkit on practice standards and guidance for Education Welfare Service practitioners. This key document aims to ensure greater consistency of practice throughout Wales and the toolkit usefully includes a section for schools that contains examples of strategies that can be employed to improve school attendance and manage lateness.

The Welsh Government's [All Wales Attendance Framework](#), contains strategies that schools can adopt to improve attendance and manage lateness.

Welsh Government has also developed guidance for all leaders, teachers and other practitioners in maintained schools and education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) settings; [Belonging, Engaging and Participating](#).

Easy read guidance for schools can be found [here](#).

Welsh Government commissioned [ParentKind](#) to undertake research amongst parents and carers in Wales with a child with attendance issues to understand more about the reasons for their absences, the support offered, and what help their family would find useful.

The **Department for Education** has released a national communications campaign on the importance of attendance targeting parents and carers. Under the strapline '[Moments Matter, Attendance Counts](#)' it outlines the importance of attendance, attainment, wellbeing and development, as well as signposting to advice for further support.

Communications toolkit for schools can be found [here](#).

A thematic [report](#) published by **Estyn** in January 2024 identifies the strengths and areas for improvement in practice and the barriers school leaders identified to pupils attending school and therefore improving attendance;

A thematic [report](#) published by Estyn in June 2015 focuses on primary schools that have led to improved levels of attendance and includes cases studies of best practice;

## 3. Vision & Purpose

### Our vision

We see a future where all children and young people can fulfil their hopes and aspirations and achieve their full potential. They will continue to learn and develop throughout their lives, becoming healthy, creative, responsible and caring citizens.

We believe that regular attendance and punctuality are fundamental to ensuring that school-age children are fully engaged in their education, forming a solid foundation for their academic success. The Local Authority, schools and settings will take the necessary steps to improve attendance and ensure that all welfare needs of children and young people are addressed, using Trauma Informed Principles.

Pembrokeshire Education Welfare Service works collaboratively with partner agencies and departments to address barriers to learning and social inclusion, and to promote school attendance.

We recognise that attending school supports pupils' wider development as full and rounded members of society. We are committed to embedding the Curriculum for Wales in schools, which is based on the four purposes that demonstrate the breadth of the academic, wellbeing and social benefits that learners gain by attending school.

Attendance cannot be considered in isolation. The many interrelated and overlapping causes of absence and the varied nature of the learner experience in school and at home mean that whole school strategies and strong-multi agency working arrangements are needed, designed to support all learners.

This strategy is intended to provide the framework for continuous improvement in school attendance and attainment in all educational settings in Pembrokeshire, by drawing skills and expertise from local authority officers, school staff and relevant agencies together to provide cohesive support for all children and young people.

Ensuring the safeguarding of all children and young people requires cohesive local partnerships to achieve positive results, focusing on the opportunities for every young person to fulfil their potential. We must ensure that such opportunities are made available to all children and young people by ensuring effective deployment of services and continued and sustained improvements in attendance levels year on year.

The responsibility for raising and promoting attendance is shared by parents/carers, children and young people, schools and a range of services across the Education Directorate and the voluntary sector.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority.
- Create a culture to promote positive attitudes towards attendance and education.
- Use attendance data systematically to identify patterns and evaluate success.
- Work in partnership with all relevant agencies to improve attendance.
- Support children & young people returning to school after significant periods of absence, removing barriers to attendance.

## 4. What is the data telling us?

The graphs and tables below show the current position and recent trends in school attendance (expressed here as absence from school), analysed by gender, disadvantage (Free School Meal eligibility) and Persistent Absenteeism:

### Pembrokeshire figures - Part year only covering Sep-Mar Only 2019/20 due to Covid-19

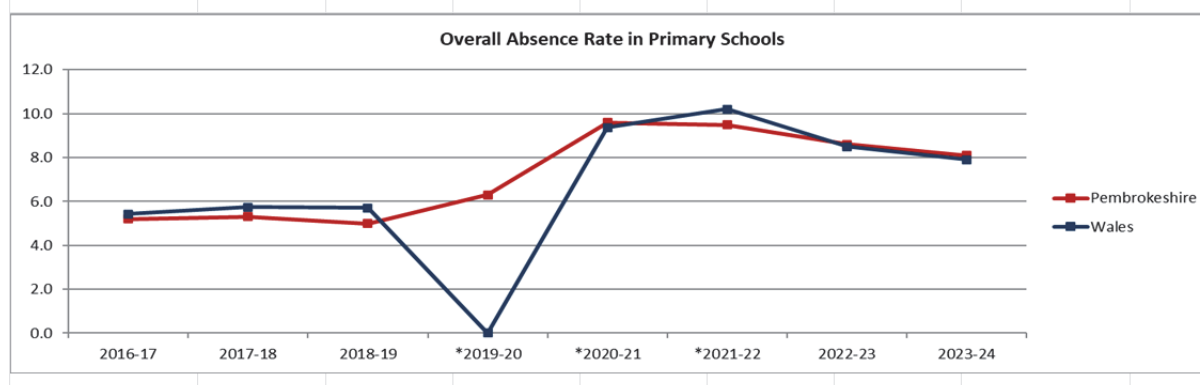
### Pembrokeshire figures - Part year only covering Sep-Dec Only 2020/21 due to Covid-19

### Pembrokeshire figures - Covering Sep-July 2021/22

### Published Data

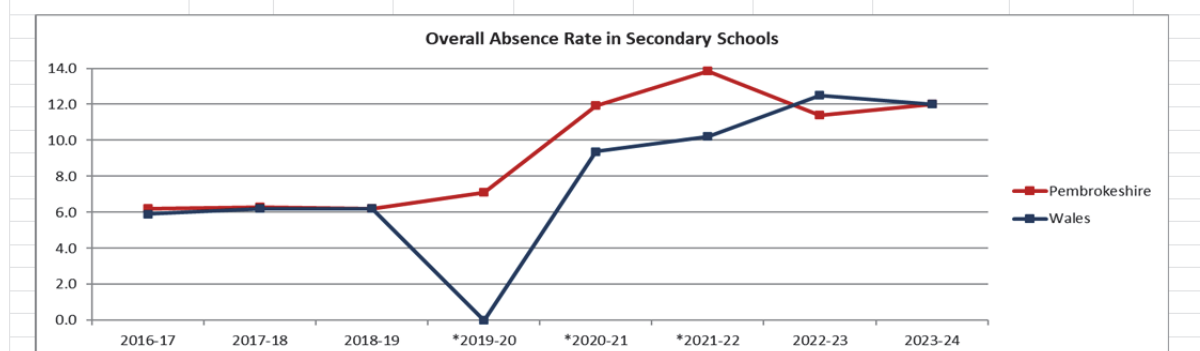
#### Overall Absence rate of statutory school age Primary School pupils (including Special Schools)

Authority	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	*2019-20	*2020-21	*2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pembrokeshire	5.2	5.3	5.0	6.3	9.6	9.5	8.6	8.1
Wales	5.4	5.7	5.7	0.0	9.4	10.2	8.5	7.9



#### Overall Absence rate of statutory school age pupils in Secondary Schools

Authority	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	*2019-20	*2020-21	*2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pembrokeshire	6.2	6.3	6.2	7.1	11.9	13.8	11.4	12.0
Wales	5.9	6.2	6.2	0.0	9.4	10.2	12.5	12.0



#### Free School Meal Attendance for Wales

2022-2023						2023-2024					
Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance			Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance		
nFSM	eFSM	Gap	nFSM	eFSM	Gap	nFSM	eFSM	Gap	nFSM	eFSM	Gap
92.4	86.6	5.8	88.0	78.0	10.0	93.4	88.1	5.3	90.2	79.9	10.3

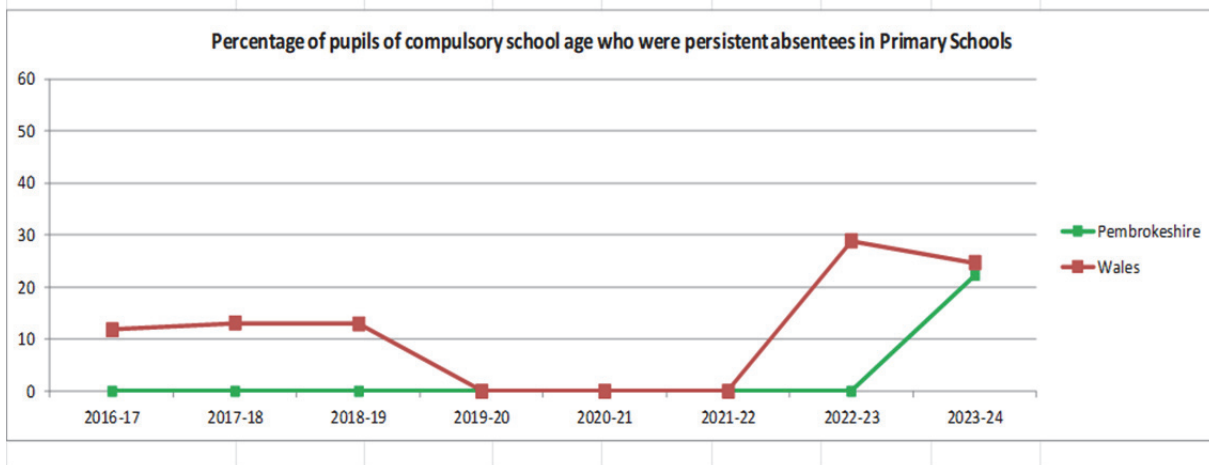
#### Free School Meal Attendance for Pembrokeshire

2022-2023						2023-2024					
Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance			Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance		
nFSM	eFSM	Gap	nFSM	eFSM	Gap	nFSM	eFSM	Gap	nFSM	eFSM	Gap
92.4	86.7	5.7	90.2	80.7	9.5	92.9	87.5	5.4	89.9	79.6	10.3

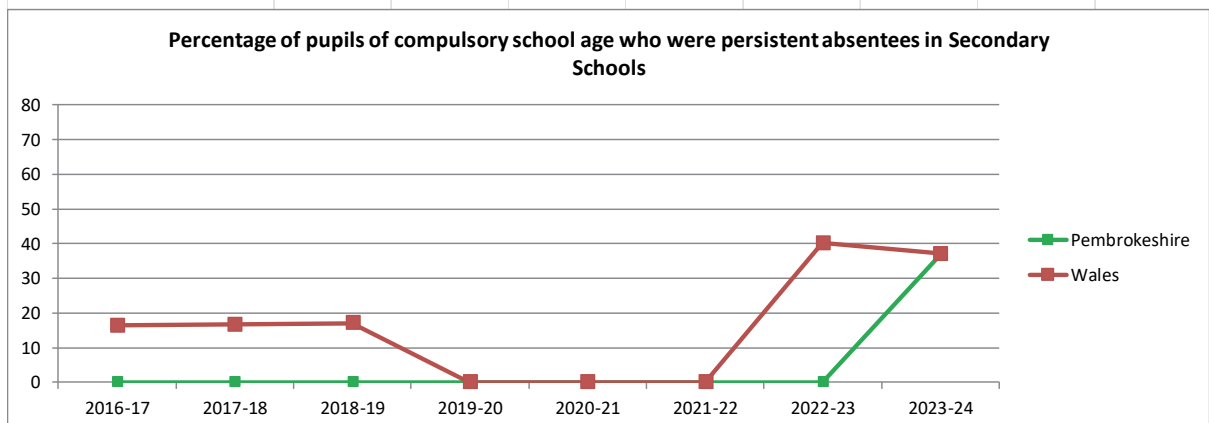
Attendance by Gender for Wales											
2022-2023						2023-2024					
Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance			Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance		
Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
91.1	91.7	0.6	86.1	85.0	1.1	91.9	92.3	0.4	88.5	87.6	0.9

Attendance by Gender for Pembrokeshire											
2022-2023						2023-2024					
Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance			Primary Attendance			Secondary Attendance		
Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
91.1	91.7	0.6	88.9	88.2	0.7	91.6	92.3	0.7	88.6	87.4	1.2

PRIMARY PUBLISHED DATA								
Authority	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pembrokeshire	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.2
Wales	11.9	13.0	12.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	28.9	24.7



SECONDARY PUBLISHED DATA								
Authority	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Pembrokeshire	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	37.0
Wales	16.4	16.7	17.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	40.1	37.1



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, absence in primary schools was somewhat lower than the Wales average (and therefore attendance was higher). Since the pandemic, absence in primary schools in Pembrokeshire has been broadly in line with the Wales average.

Before the pandemic, overall absence in secondary schools was in line with the Wales average. In 2022/23, there was a marked decrease in absence, but an increase in 2023/24 to being in line with the Wales average.

The 'disadvantage gap' in primary schools (5.4) is around half that in secondary schools (10.3). Both are in line with the Wales average. In the primary phase, males have slightly higher absence than females, but this 'flips' in the secondary phase, with absence of females being higher than males, and the gap in Pembrokeshire being slightly wider than nationally.

Persistent Absenteeism (defined as absence of 10% or more) is slightly lower in Pembrokeshire's primary phase than nationally, but in line with the Wales average in the secondary phase.

## 5. Strategy Objectives

### **Objective 1: Promote a positive attendance culture across schools.**

Creating a positive culture around school attendance is essential for fostering a learning environment where children and young people feel motivated, valued, and supported.

Schools will work to highlight the importance of regular attendance as a foundation for academic success, personal growth, and future opportunities. Through school-wide initiatives, awareness campaigns, and recognition programmes, children and young people, and families will be encouraged to prioritise attendance.

By making regular attendance an achievable and celebrated goal, we aim to create a shared commitment among children and young people, staff, and families to help every learner reach their full potential.

**Early Years Initiative:** To collaborate with non-statutory school-age children and their families to build a foundation for positive attendance in the early years through consistent routines, family engagement, and emphasising the importance of regular attendance for early development.

**School-Wide Initiatives:** Schools will adopt school-wide initiatives that promote attendance as a community value. This may include themed attendance weeks, workshops for parents on fostering good attendance habits, and student-led presentations on the benefits of being present in class. By actively involving learners in promoting attendance, we can instil a sense of ownership and pride in their educational experience.

**Recognition Programs:** To further incentivise attendance, schools will develop recognition programs that celebrate both individual and collective achievements. This could involve rewards for learners with excellent attendance, classroom competitions, or school-wide recognition for classes that demonstrate improved attendance rates. Celebrating successes helps to create a positive feedback loop, motivating learners to continue attending regularly. Within this, it is very important that schools recognise and reward *improvement* in attendance, and attendance that is creditable given the pupil's circumstances, such as being a young carer.

**Collaboration with Stakeholders:** Collaboration with parents, community organisations, and local businesses will be essential in promoting a positive attendance culture. Engaging families in discussions about attendance, addressing barriers they may face, and offering resources for support will help create a strong home-school connection. Furthermore, partnerships with local organisations can provide additional incentives and support systems for families.

**Continuous Monitoring and Support:** We will support schools to establish mechanisms for ongoing monitoring of attendance patterns, including detailed analysis of the potential effect of the asymmetric week. By utilising data analytics, we can identify trends, recognise learners at risk of absenteeism early, and provide timely interventions. Support teams, including counsellors and Family Engagement Officers, will be on hand to address any underlying issues that may hinder attendance, ensuring that every student receives the support they need to succeed.

**Sharing good practice:** Develop and implement a platform for schools that promotes a positive attendance culture by working collaboratively to share and embed good practices.

By fostering a positive attendance culture, we aim to create a shared commitment among children and young people, staff, and families to help every learner reach their full potential. This collective effort not only enhances educational outcomes but also builds a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success.

## **Objective 2: Implement a Trauma Informed Approach to attendance support**

Recognising the profound impact of trauma on a child/young person's capability to engage with their education, our objective is to implement a trauma-informed approach to attendance support across all schools. This approach prioritises understanding, recognising, and responding to the effects of trauma, ensuring that all learners feel safe, supported, and capable of achieving their academic goals.

We aim to establish a trauma informed schools' culture across the local authority by embedding trauma awareness and support into every aspect of education. This will be achieved through comprehensive staff training, implementing clear policies that prioritise emotional and psychological safety, fostering collaboration between schools and continually evaluating our progress to ensure meaningful change.

**Training for Staff:** In partnership with the Educational Psychology Service, we will provide comprehensive training for school-based staff on trauma-informed practices. This training will equip them with the skills to identify signs of trauma, respond empathetically, and create a nurturing environment that fosters resilience. By understanding the underlying causes of absenteeism, staff will be better prepared to support affected learners effectively.

To date 1,336 members of school staff have accessed the 2.5-hour twilight Trauma Informed Schools session, with 165 school and Inclusion staff members completing the TIS Diploma. Almost all Pembrokeshire schools have at least one member of staff trained or being trained in the Diploma.

Most of our Special School Teachers have completed the TIS Diploma, with one of our primary schools (Neyland) having 16 members of staff trained, this is now also a TIS accredited school.

70 school staff and 7 PCC inclusion Service staff have completed the 2-day TIS Senior Leadership Training.

The whole of the Education Welfare Service has completed the TIS Diploma, ensuring that they are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide trauma-informed support to children and families.

**Safe and Supportive Environments:** Schools will focus on cultivating safe and supportive environments where learners feel respected and valued. This includes establishing clear

behavioural expectations, providing emotional support, and fostering positive relationships between learners and staff. By promoting a sense of belonging and community, we aim to reduce anxiety and create conditions conducive to regular attendance.

**Individualised Support Plans:** We will develop individualised support plans for children and young people identified as having experienced trauma or facing significant barriers to attendance. These plans will involve collaboration between educators, mental health professionals, and families to address the unique needs of each student. By providing tailored interventions and resources, we can help learners navigate their challenges and improve their attendance.

By implementing a trauma-informed approach to attendance support, we aim to remove barriers to learning, empower learners, and promote resilience. This holistic strategy not only addresses the root causes of absenteeism but also fosters an inclusive and compassionate school environment, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for all children and young people.

### **Objective 3: Strengthen early intervention and support for key transition years (5-8)**

Recognising that the transition years from primary to secondary education are pivotal in shaping a child/young person's educational journey, our objective is to strengthen early intervention and support for learners, particularly in Years 5, 6, 7 & 8. During these critical years, children and young people experience significant changes academically, socially, and emotionally, which can impact their attendance and overall engagement in school.

Effective support during these times can help prevent Persistent Absenteeism and Emotionally Based School Avoidance, ensuring children and young people remained engaged and committed to their education.

**Proactive Monitoring:** We will implement proactive monitoring systems to track attendance patterns and identify at-risk learners during these transition years. By analysing attendance data and engaging with school-based staff, we can spot early warning signs of disengagement or absenteeism, allowing us to intervene promptly.

**Transition Support:** We will encourage school to establish dedicated transition support comprising of teachers, counsellors, Education Welfare Officers (EWO's) and Family Engagement Officers (FEO's) who work collaboratively to support children and young people through these key years. These teams will facilitate communication between schools, families, and children and young people, ensuring that everyone is informed and involved in the support process.

**Family Involvement:** Engaging families during these transition years is crucial for success. In partnership with the Family Support Team, we will provide resources and workshops for parents, offering strategies to support their children through changes in school structure, curriculum, and social dynamics. By strengthening the home-school connection, we aim to create a supportive network that encourages regular attendance and fosters pupil well-being.

By strengthening early intervention and support for key transition years, we aim to create a foundation for long-term academic success and positive school experiences. This comprehensive approach will help learners navigate the complexities of their educational journey, ensuring they remain engaged, supported, and ready to thrive in their learning environments.

#### **Objective 4: Utilise Family Engagement Officers to build strong home-school connections for attendance.**

Establishing strong home-school connections is essential for promoting consistent school attendance and fostering pupil success. Our aim is to leverage the expertise of Family Engagement Officers (FEOs) to create and strengthen partnerships between schools and families, ensuring that all learners have the support they need to attend school regularly.

**Dedicated Support for Families:** Family Engagement Officers will serve as dedicated liaisons between schools and families, providing tailored support and resources to help parents navigate challenges related to attendance. By understanding the unique circumstances of each family, FEOs can offer practical strategies and solutions to address barriers to attendance, such as transportation issues, health concerns, or family dynamics.

**Proactive Communication:** FEO's will establish proactive communication channels with families, reaching out regularly to share important information about attendance policies, school events, and available resources. By keeping families informed and engaged, we aim to build trust and foster a collaborative environment where parents feel empowered to support their children's education.

**Family Engagement Officer Network:** To further enhance family engagement, we will continue to organise workshops and training sessions for the FEOs. These sessions will focus on topics such as the importance of regular attendance, how to create a positive learning environment at home, and effective communication strategies between parents and teachers. Developing knowledge and skills, we aim to reinforce the critical role that parents play in their children's educational journey.

**Involvement in School Activities:** Family Engagement Officers will encourage family involvement in school activities and events, creating opportunities for parents to connect with teachers and school staff. This involvement not only fosters a sense of belonging but also helps families understand the school environment better, leading to increased support for attendance.

**The Family and Community Engagement (FaCE) Project:** Designed to strengthen partnerships between schools, families, and communities. It focuses on fostering collaboration, improving communication, and supporting families to create positive learning environments that enhance student engagement and success. All schools have completed at least one round of FaCE delivery, and we will work to encourage ongoing delivery by schools and maintain capacity within the Local Authority to support schools to do this.

**Culturally Responsive Practices:** Recognising the diverse backgrounds of our population, FEOs will employ culturally responsive practices to engage families from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. By respecting and valuing different perspectives, we can create a more inclusive environment that encourages all families to participate actively in their children's education.

**Family Engagement:** Engaging families is crucial to our trauma-informed approach. In conjunction with the Family Support Team, we will provide resources and training for parents/carers to help them understand the effects of trauma and how they can support their children's attendance at school. By fostering open communication and involving families in the support process, we can create a unified approach to addressing attendance challenges.

By utilising Family Engagement Officers to build strong home-school connections, we aim to create a supportive network that promotes regular attendance and student success. This collaborative approach will ensure that families feel connected, informed, and empowered to play an active role in their children's educational journeys, ultimately leading to improved attendance rates and academic outcomes.

## 6. Legal context

While the parent or carer is primarily responsible for ensuring their child attends their registered school regularly, where school attendance problems occur, the key to resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the local authority. Our strong preference is to work with families to remove barriers to regular school attendance, adopting a supportive approach. However, the law is clear – it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child receives an education, and failure to do so carries consequences.

The [Education Act 1996](#) sets out that parents must ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive appropriate full-time education according to their age, ability and aptitude. Ordinarily this involves ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually. "Regularly" means "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school" i.e. every day the school is open (Isle of Wight Council -v- Platt 06 April 2017).

Under the Section 576 of the Education Act, any person who has care of a child – whether or not they are the parent – or who has parental responsibility, is deemed to be 'a parent' and is therefore responsible for ensuring regular school attendance.

A parent is guilty of an offence if their child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly – **Section 444(1) Education Act 1996**. In such a situation if the parent **knows** that their child is not attending, they may be prosecuted for a more serious offence – **Section 444 (1) (a) Education Act 1996**. Failure to ensure school attendance can result in prosecution.

Parents who fail to register their child at a suitable school without good reason and who are not providing a suitable education themselves, will be served with a School Attendance Order directing that their child attends the school named on the order. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and will result in prosecution – **Section 443 Education Act 1996**.

As part of this strategy we will:

- prosecute when supportive options have been offered to the parents/carers but not engaged with
- Work to accelerate the timescales in which we bring cases to court and use data to identify where cases could be brought, rather than waiting for schools to refer to the EWO.
- Carry out more Section 444a ('knowingly') prosecutions, where warranted
- All repeat prosecutions will automatically be Section 444(1a), unless exceptional circumstances apply
- Consider using **all** the available legal options such as Education Supervision Orders, Parenting Orders etc, recognising that there is a resource issue to this.

- Encourage both primary and secondary schools to submit requests for Penalty Notices as an effective early intervention tool to address issues promptly and support improved outcomes for children

## **7. Multi-Agency Working**

EWO's work in conjunction with Family Engagement Officers (FEOs) in efforts to raise attendance and attainment levels. This is done collaboratively by working together with families and schools. EWO's have a dual role to play as a provider of a service to the school and as mediator between home and school.

EWO's regularly visit their allocated schools to ensure that schools and EWO's identify vulnerable pupils at the earliest stage. This provides a holistic approach in ensuring appropriate support is available for children, young people and their families. Multi-agency working is key to ensuring families receive the correct support based on their needs.

The EWS also works closely with the Family Support Team, local Neighbourhood Policing Teams, the School Improvement Advisors, the Youth Offending Team, Parent Partnership, the Inclusion Service, Educational Psychology Service, health services, housing association, and voluntary organisations to assisting in resolving non-school attendance.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, every case is different, and we will always try to support families in partnership with other agencies to improve the situation. By working in partnership, it is our aspiration that every pupil achieves at least 96% attendance, and in particular a continuous reduction in persistent absenteeism.

## **8. Targeted Interventions**

For some learners and parents, the barriers to learning they face have been made worse since the pandemic. In some cases, the intensive support provided during the pandemic improved relationships between school and home and led to better attendance. In other cases, previous habits of good attendance have not been re-established, and more casual attitudes to learning and school attendance have increased.

Transition periods, particularly from primary to secondary school, are critical in shaping children and young people's attitudes towards attendance and academic performance. This strategy aims to enhance attendance rates, address Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), and Persistent Absenteeism (PA), while supporting parents and carers in understanding the importance of regular school attendance.

The EWS can offer additional support to schools on a needs-led basis in order to improve attendance. This forms part of our collaborative working which entails the allocated EWO for each school discussing the individual need and arranging an appropriate plan for improving attendance. This is an intensive intervention and involves a partnership approach, working together with school to improve attendance levels.

Interventions from the EBSA Advisor are also helpful in supporting schools to address and mitigate issues related to school avoidance. The EBSA Advisor can provide specialist training for school staff, equipping them with the skills to identify and address early signs of EBSA. As part of this strategy, we will review the EBSA Advisor role, seeking to broaden the expertise that has been developed to a wide group of practitioners.

The EWS are fully trained in Trauma Informed Principles which we feel has significantly enhanced our ability to support improved school attendance. By understanding and recognising the impact of trauma on children and young people's behaviour and learning, our team can create a more supportive and empathetic environment. Trauma Informed approaches have helped to build trust and a sense of security for children, young people and their families, making them feel more comfortable and engaged both with our service and at school. Consequently, children and young people who feel understood and supported are more likely to attend school regularly, leading to improved attendance rates and better academic outcomes.

## **9. Training and support**

All staff with responsibility for attendance in schools should receive appropriate training including the correct use of coding on the registers, appropriate challenge to parents, accurate input of data, exporting data and full usage and knowledge of SIMS.

Pembrokeshire's EWS will offer support to all schools covering such issues as:

- strategies for promoting regular attendance and persistent absenteeism
- strategies to support EBSA and PA
- improving communication with parents
- good practice in monitoring punctuality
- training on the use of SIMS
- developing a whole-school attendance policy
- rewards and incentives

The EWOs will offer training for all schools to access and will also offer bespoke training to schools when requested.

## **10. Supporting attendance of children & young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)**

We recognise that children with ALN, regardless of whether this has been a formal diagnosis, may have additional barriers to attend school. The EWO, Inclusion Service and Educational Psychology Service, will work with Headteachers, the school Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCO) and other school staff to address pupil's poor attendance which may be related to unidentified or unmet ALN.

Supporting the attendance of children and young people with ALN involves creating individualised support plans, collaborating with key services and departments and implementing flexible practices and reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs.

## **11. Anti-discriminatory practice**

The EWS is committed to upholding the principles of Pembrokeshire's Strategic Equality Plan by delivering support that is tailored to individual needs and circumstances. We strive to ensure that every child, family, and school we engage with feels respected and valued, regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, social background, or additional learning need. By actively promoting equal opportunities in all

aspects of our work and challenging discrimination whenever it occurs, we aim to create an inclusive and supportive environment that empowers everyone to thrive.

This commitment helps the EWS foster trust and build stronger relationships with the communities we serve, ensuring that no one is left behind. An equitable approach enables us to address barriers to education more effectively, reduce absenteeism, and support positive outcomes for all children and young people. For the local authority, promoting equality and inclusivity strengthens its reputation as a fair and progressive organisation, enhances community cohesion, and aligns with national standards and legal obligations. Together, these efforts help create a more resilient, inclusive, and high-performing education system that benefits every resident in Pembrokeshire.

## **12. Action planning**

The EWO's will work with schools to develop action plans to improve attendance at whole school level. This will rely on individual schools' analysis of data and of its attendance profile. Schools should work closely with their allocated EWO to develop action plans for school level action as well as developing individual pupil level action plans.

Schools with concerning levels of absence will receive additional EWS support and be encouraged to develop an agreed school action plan to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism.

The main areas that should be covered in the whole school action plan are:

- improved senior leadership response to attendance
- improved tracking, recording and monitoring arrangements
- targeted additional support
- Improved support and challenge for parents
- targeted support to vulnerable groups
- support transition years i.e. primary to secondary
- working with partners to support parents to reduce illness related absence
- target specific work with parents of children in early years settings to ensure good attendance habits are developed early and parents understand their responsibilities

Through addressing attendance related issues *together*, we can identify underlying challenges, implement effective solutions, and create a supportive environment that encourages consistent attendance. This approach not only helps to tackle disengagement but also promotes improved academic performance, stronger relationships, and greater overall success for the children and young people of Pembrokeshire.

The local authority will carry out Attendance Reviews with schools to address patterns of absenteeism, understand underlying causes, and develop targeted interventions to improve attendance. By conducting these reviews, schools can provide the local authority with good practice to share amongst all schools to support improvement overall.

The purpose of this attendance strategy is to support schools in improving attendance rates by providing guidance and resources while ensuring compliance with legal duties to address persistent absenteeism. We aim to promote equal access to education by reducing barriers for vulnerable learners and families. The strategy emphasises collaboration with schools, the EWS, and other agencies to address attendance issues holistically. By monitoring

attendance data, we can identify trends, set targets, and implement effective interventions to improve outcomes for the children and young people of Pembrokeshire.

Between 2025 and 2027, we aim to achieve a comprehensive improvement in attendance through our objectives. By promoting a positive attendance culture across schools, the strategy seeks to create an environment where regular attendance is valued, leading to increased student engagement and better outcomes. Implementing a Trauma-Informed approach will ensure that underlying issues are addressed empathetically, allowing for more personalised support. Strengthening early intervention, particularly in key transition years (5-8), will provide targeted support to prevent disengagement and ensure consistent attendance at critical stages of a child’s education. The role of Family Engagement Officers will foster strong home-school connections, enabling families to play an active role in overcoming barriers to attendance. Ultimately, these efforts aim to create a supportive, inclusive approach to improving attendance, ensuring that all students can succeed academically and remain engaged in their education.

### 13. Implementation and Performance Management

Our progress in implementing this strategy will be monitored in three ways:

- the Education Directorate and Council’s Service Plan monitoring processes. Key actions from the strategy will be built into the 2026/26 and 2026/27 Inclusion Service Plans, with clear milestones to evaluate progress against and quarterly reporting by the EWS Manager and Head of Engagement, Performance and Communities.
- The Education and Schools Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive reports on the implementation of the strategy on at least an annual basis.
- We will also report annually to the Pembrokeshire Headteachers and Chair of Governors forums.

Our targets for improvement over the lifetime of this strategy:

#### Overall Absence

2023/24 Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Target 2026/27
Primary - 8.1%	Primary – 7.6%	Primary – 6.9%	Primary – 6.0%
Secondary – 12.0%	Secondary – 11.4%	Secondary – 10.5%	Secondary – 9.7%

#### Persistent Absence

2023/24 Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Target 2026/27
Primary - 22.2%	Primary – 21.0	Primary – 19.5	Primary – 18.7
Secondary – 37.0%	Secondary – 34%	Secondary – 31%	Secondary – 28%

#### Disadvantage Gap

2023/24 Baseline	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Target 2026/27
Primary – 5.4	Primary – 5.0	Primary – 4.4	Primary – 3.8
Secondary – 10.3%	Secondary – 9.7	Secondary – 9.0	Secondary – 8.3

Pembrokeshire's Education Welfare Service would like to thank

**Jessica Williams**

**Age 13**

**Greenhill School**

for her fantastic contribution to the Pembrokeshire Local Authorities Attendance Strategy 2025 - 2027, for being chosen as the competition winner, designing the best Attendance Strategy Logo.

*Well done Jessica!*

