Pecyn dogfennau cyhoeddus

Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc

Lleoliad:
Ystafell Bwyllgora 1 - Y Senedd

Dyddiad:
Dydd Iau, 21 Chwefror 2013

Amser:
09:00

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
National Assembly for Wales

I gael rhagor o wybodaeth, cysylltwch â:

Polisi: Claire Morris
Clerc y Pwyllgor
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Agenda

Cyfarfod cyn y prif gyfarfod (09.00-09.15)

1. Cyflwyniad, ymddiheuriadau a dirprwyon

2. Craffu ar Adroddiad Blynyddol Estyn 2011-2012 (09.15-10.30)

Estyn

Ms Ann Keane, Prif Arolygydd Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Simon Brown, Cyfarwyddwr Strategol

Meilyr Rowlands, Cyfarwyddwr Strategol

http://www.estyn.gov.uk/download/publications/268359/ar-2011-2012-compendium/

Egwyl (10.30-10.45)

3. Ymchwiliad i Bresenoldeb ac Ymddygiad - Sesiwn dystiolaeth (10.45-11.30) (Tudalennau 1 - 17)

Estyn

Ms Ann Keane, Prif Arolygydd Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Simon Brown, Cyfarwyddwr Strategol

Meilyr Rowlands, Cyfarwyddwr Strategol

4. Ymchwiliad i Bresenoldeb ac Ymddygiad - Sesiwn dystiolaeth (11.30-12.15) (Tudalennau 18 - 20)

SNAP Cymru

Caroline Rawson, Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol

5. Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i benderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod (12.15-12.30)

National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People Committee
Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour January 2013

This paper from Estyn, the inspectorate for education and training in Wales, has been prepared in response to a request from the Children and Young People Committee.

Introduction

This paper argues that it is often poverty and disadvantage that underlie the more serious attendance and behaviour issues in our schools and in the education system more generally. Disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be absent from school, they are more likely to behave in a challenging way, to be excluded and to end up being educated other than at school. As a result, they are more at risk of underachieving.

This paper sets out some of our inspection findings in relation to attendance and beahviour. It also outlines how successful schools deal with issues of poor attendance, behaviour and disengagement . Appendix 1 contains examples of case studies of schools that have overcome obstacles to do with poverty and disadvantage to engage and support pupils so that they can benefit fully from their education and achieve the outcomes they deserve.

Attendance

While attendance is good in many of the schools we inspect, it is the weakest aspect of pupils' wellbeing. In about a third of secondary schools, attendance is not good enough and 16% of primary school inspection reports in 2011-12 had a recommendation to improve attendance.

There is a big difference in attendance rates between schools in the least and most deprived areas. In many schools we inspect, there is a correlation between the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, the rate of absenteeism, and the standards pupils achieve. In general, schools with a higher proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals have higher absenteeism rates. The following data tables illustrate this relationship between the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the rate of absenteeism.

Figure 1: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory age in all maintained secondary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2011-2012[1]

Proportion entitled to free school meals	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
10% or less	6.3	0.6	50
15% or less, but over 10%	7.2	0.9	58
20% or less, but over 15%	8.0	1.1	34
30% or less, but over 20%	8.9	1.9	52
over 30%	10.7	3.6	27
All maintained schools	7.9	1.4	221

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record and PLASC, Welsh Government

(a) Free school meal data are based on a three year average.

Figure 2: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory age in all maintained primary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2010-2011[2]

Proportion entitled to free school meals (b)	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
8% or less	5.2	0.3	358
16% or less, but over 8%	6.2	0.5	351
24% or less, but over 16%	6.9	0.9	284
32% or less, but over 24%	7.5	1.1	192
over 32%	8.4	2.0	256
All maintained schools	6.7	0.9	1,441

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record and PLASC, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) Free school meal data is based on a three year average.
(b) Free school meal boundaries have been changed to match those used in primary attendance benchmarking.

Attendance is inspected as part of our inspections of a local authorities' statutory duty to promote social inclusion and wellbeing. This duty also includes services that prevent pupils from being excluded from school, support vulnerable groups of learners and provide all young people with access to appropriate guidance and advice.

In the fifteen local authority inspection reports published to date, we award one excellent, four good, nine adequate and one unsatisfactory judgement for the quality of social inclusion and wellbeing services.

Attendance rates have been highlighted as an area for improvement in around half of the local authorities inspected in the current cycle.

In the authorities where arrangements for wellbeing are good:

- pupils respond well to professional support, guidance and counselling, which have improved their wellbeing and outcomes;
- pupils' attendance in schools compares well to that in other authorities that have a similar social and economic background; and
- pupil engagement is good and fewer pupils are excluded from school.

[1] SDR159/2012 - Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2011/12, Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2012/120925sdr1592012en.pdf

[2] SDR231/2011 - Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2010/11, Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2011/111214sdr2312011en.pdf

Even where authorities have appropriate initiatives to improve attendance and reduce exclusion, the majority of authorities do not evaluate these initiatives effectively enough to bring about further improvements to benefit learners. In half of the authorities inspected, strategies and projects to improve attendance have not yet had enough impact.

All the cases in which we have seen attendance improve have involved better use of data to challenge under performance and to target support more effectively where it can have the greatest impact. The fact that attendance figures are factored into the Welsh Government secondary school banding calculation has also meant that all secondary schools now pay much greater attention to improving attendance rates.

Support for attendance works most effectively when local authority officers work closely with schools and a range of partners to share responsibility for improving performance. In those authorities judged to be good or better, effective co-operation between statutory and voluntary partners has led to the establishment of multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams to focus on the specific needs of learners and their families. In a few cases, this has led to coordinated support and intervention designed to meet identified social and educational needs. One of the key success factors has been the targeting of difficult-to-reach families and the use of 'first-day response' to contact families. This strategy has improved both attendance rates and standards for the pupils concerned in secondary schools but has yet to be used to full effect in primary schools.

The table below shows rates of pupil absenteeism by local authority. It illustrates how some authorities manage to sustain relatively good attendance rates in spite of their rates of deprivation.

Figure 3. Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools by local authority

Local Authority	All absences 2011/12	Unauthorised absences 2011/12
Isle of Anglesey	7.8	0.7
Gwynedd	7.9	0.9
Conwy	7.3	1.5
Denbighshire	7.1	1.5
Flintshire	7.0	0.5
Wrexham	7.2	1.7
Powys	7.1	0.4
Ceredigion	6.3	1.1
Pembrokeshire	7.4	0.5
Carmarthenshire	8.6	0.6
Swansea	8.0	1.4
Neath Port Talbot	7.7	0.5

Bridgend	8.1	1.6
The Vale of Glamorgan	7.3	1.0
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	9.4	2.1
Merthyr Tydfil	7.6	1.0
Caerphilly	8.3	1.8
Blaenau Gwent	9.6	2.4
Torfaen	7.7	1.2
Monmouthshire	7.0	0.6
Newport	8.1	2.1
Cardiff	8.3	2.7
Wales	7.8	1.4

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

In many local authorities the links between the education welfare service (EWS) and school improvement services are not strong enough. Although in some local authorities the EWS function actually sits within the school improvement service, traditionally, attendance and education welfare have not always been seen as priorities for school improvement services. The Welsh Government's secondary school banding system has started to change this attitude. Nevertheless, the quality and use of data to inform the planning of the work of education welfare officers (EWO) are variable across the authorities that we have inspected.

One of the more effective authorities uses a combination of initiatives including:

- training and raising the awareness of school leaders and managers;
- adopting new attendance follow-up procedures;
- reviewing the work of the education welfare service;
- setting up new joint working arrangements between the school improvement service and EWS; and
- improving data collation and analysis.

These initiatives have enabled officers to target support to vulnerable pupils with very low attendance rates through working more closely with Family First, the authority's looked-after children (LAC) coordinator and support unit for Gypsy Travellers. In addition, the education department works well staff in other council departments or voluntary organisation who work in the community, such as street scene officers and housing association staff to improve the reporting of truancy.

The analysis and use of data have helped several authorities to identify where attendance is low and to target those schools. Transparency in the use of data means that every school in the authority is given the data for all schools in the authority and this data is colour coded to show which quartile each school is in. The data is also shared with local authority officers and elected members.

In another authority, officers have identified schools with good attendance and are using these schools as case studies of good practice to help other schools to improve. This has been effective in those schools with poor attendance that were targeted first and the approach is now being implemented more widely across the authority's schools.

Behaviour

Behaviour is the least positive aspects of responses to the questionnaires that Estyn asks pupils to complete before each inspection, with only three-quarters of primary pupils and two-thirds of secondary pupils believing that other pupils behave well.

Even so, behaviour is generally good in most primary schools. Most pupils are attentive and enthusiastic. In a very few excellent schools, nearly all pupils are highly motivated and fully engaged in their learning. In very few schools do pupils regularly disrupt lessons or daily routines. Only one school of the over 200 schools inspected last year had a recommendation to improve behaviour.

Behaviour is also good overall in most secondary schools. Most pupils are courteous, get on well with each other and show positive attitudes to learning, school and each other. In schools where wellbeing is excellent overall, the high standards of behaviour and outstanding willingness to learn are particularly evident. In a minority of schools, even though behaviour may be good overall, a few pupils either spend too much time off-task or engage in low-level disruption.

Where issues relating to poor behaviour are managed well, schools keep detailed records of specific incidents and maintain logs to record the length of time during which pupils are removed from normal lessons without being formally excluded. These schools analyse and evaluate regularly the progress of pupils who are removed from lessons or formally excluded.

Many authorities are strengthening the way they implement strategies for behaviour management and support. In the three authorities judged to be good in 2011-12, these arrangements help schools and staff from different agencies to work together to help families to improve children and young people's capacity to learn. These authorities focus their support for particular individuals' needs by helping families to set consistent boundaries and bedtimes or to understand why good attendance at school is important. Many authorities are also improving the way they use data to plan services so they can be more customised.

In a minority of authorities there isalready more consistent reporting of exclusions, better preventative work with those at risk and reductions in requests for support when interventions have been ineffective.

Three local authorities out of the two-thirds inspected in the current cycle were given a recommendation in their inspection to address the high level of pupil exclusions.

The ENGAGE initiative is a joint initiative to support young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or at risk of NEET which involves Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Neath Port Talbot, who were the lead authority, as well as six further education colleges. It is funded through the European Funding Office (WEFO). The initiative engaged some 12,000 participants, targeting young people aged 14-16 who were at risk of disengagement and 16-19 year olds in further education and at risk of dropping out. A range of techniques is being used such as vocational training, one-to-one intensive support and activities to raise self-esteem will encourage young people to remain in education and improve their skills. The scheme also assists those who are not attending school or college by supporting them back into education and it also works with Pupil Referral Units, care leavers and young offenders, providing additional learning support for those who are not in mainstream education. An interim evaluation carried out by external consultants for Neath Port Talbot authority noted that the initiative appeared to be having a significant impact on the incidence of NEETS and secondary school exclusions.

Education other than at school (EOTAS)

There is a link between poverty and behavioural difficulties. The table below shows that a disproportionate percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals are educated other than at schools (about two-thirds, compared to a fifth if they were represented proportionately).

Figure 4: Pupils whose main education is other than at school, by free school meal entitlement[3]

	2009/10 (a)		2010/11		2011/12	
Free school meal entitlement	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Entitled to FSM	646	65%	689	66%	711	69%
Not entitled to FSM	349	35%	354	34%	315	31%
Total	995		1,043		1,026	

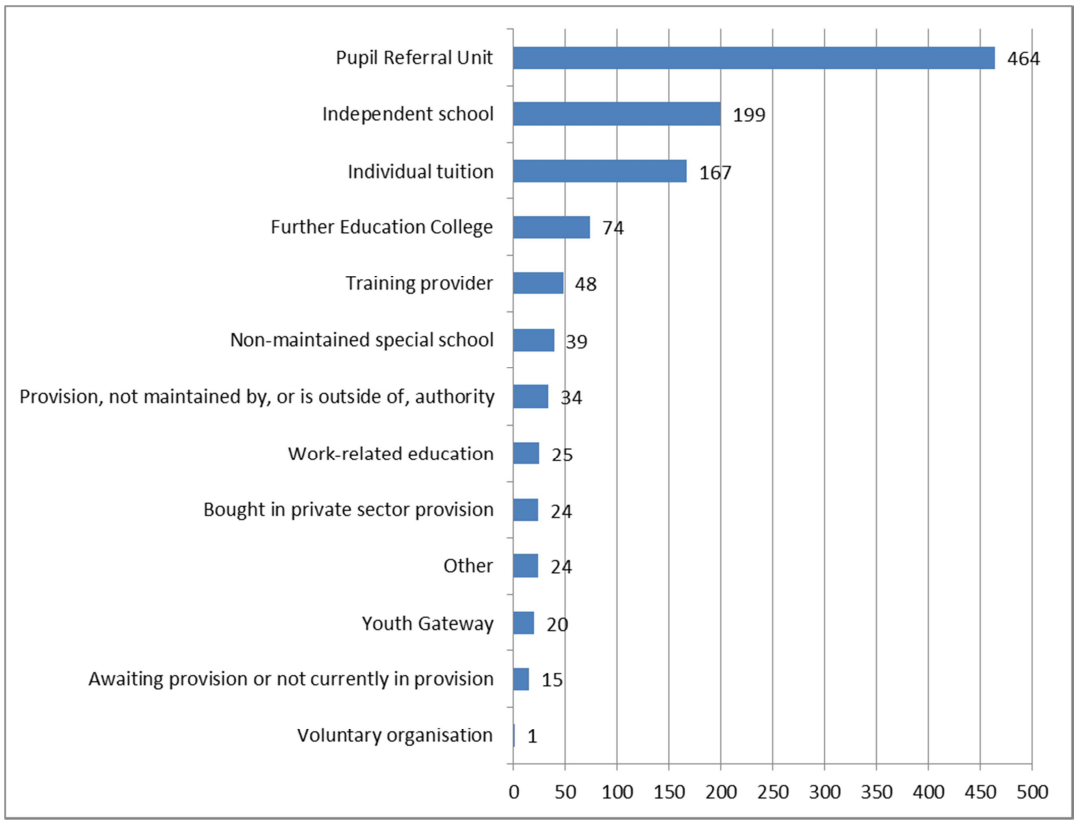
Source: EOTAS Pupil Census, Welsh Government

(a) Two local authorities failed to provide data for 2009/10. All 22 local authorities provided data in the following years

There are many reasons why pupils are educated other than at school. In many cases, it is because they have been excluded from a school, often because of their behaviour. The chart below shows that, when pupils are taught other than at school, the highest proportion (nearly 40%) of them are taught in a pupil referral unit.

[3] SDR 140/2012 - Pupils Educated other than at School, 2011/12, Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/schools2012/120829/?lang=en

Figure 5: Pupil enrolments of those taught other than at school, by educational provision, 2011-2012[4] (all-Wales figures)



Pupil referral units (PRUs)

Pupil referral units (PRUs) should be short-stay centres that provide education for vulnerable and challenging pupils with the aim of re-integration into mainstream schooling or other appropriate education, training or employment. However, the success of PRUs in re-integrating pupils or in offering a broad curriculum varies unacceptably, even between sites of the same PRU. Pupils on one site of a PRU we inspected recently only attend part-time and do not gain useful qualifications, while at the other site of the same PRU, pupils have a full-time programme and access to a varied curriculum, and gain appropriate qualifications.

In many PRUs, pupils do improve their reading, spelling and social skills and gain a range of suitable qualifications. Pupils learn to manage their behaviour and many, particularly at key stage 3, make a successful return to their school. In a minority of PRUs however, pupils do not develop their literacy and numeracy skills well enough, do not regularly contribute to decisions about the life and work of the PRUs and stay at the PRU for long periods.

Teaching staff in PRUs do a difficult job with pupils whose behaviour can be challenging. Many do it well. PRUs generally have appropriate policies in place to

[4] SDR 140/2012 - Pupils Educated other than at School, 2011/12, Welsh Government
http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/schools2012/120829/?lang=en

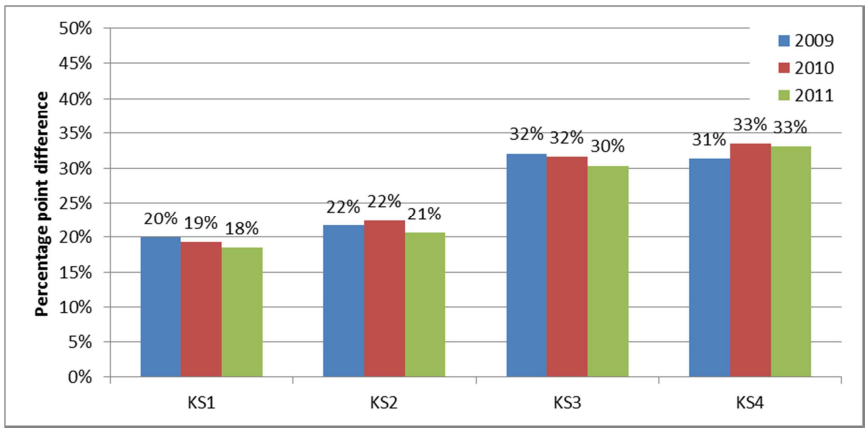
help them in their work with vulnerable pupils. This year, we visited several PRUs to evaluate their behaviour management strategies, and how they apply restrictive physical intervention and restraint. Six of the seven PRUs visited have adopted suitable behaviour management policies. Staff in these PRUs are well trained and confident in using these techniques to defuse potentially confrontational situations.

In the best practice, PRU staff teach pupils how to manage their own behaviour and use agreed behaviour management plans and individual pupil risk-assessments to help them. However, in most cases, pupil-planning systems do not address the management of difficult behaviour with individual pupils well enough. Frequently they do not use individual pupil risk-assessments or off-site risk-assessments well enough to safeguard pupils and staff adequately. PRUs do not do enough to monitor the impact of their day-to-day practice on pupils' wellbeing and behaviour. Record-keeping is not always detailed enough to allow analysis that would help staff to evaluate how well their strategies and practices are working.

Poverty and attendance and behaviour

Poverty and disadvantage are associated with poor attendance and behaviour in schools. Pupils who are disadvantaged in this way are at risk of underachieving. At all key stages in Wales, pupils who are entitled to free school meals[5] perform significantly less well than those who are not eligible and the gap in performance betwee the two groups widens during schooling. The performance of both free school meals (FSM) and non-free school meals (non-FSM) groups of pupils improves each year, but the gap between the two remains too wide. The gap widens further in secondary schools, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 6: Gap in percentages of FSM and non-FSM pupils attaining the core subject indicator at each stage between 2009 and 2011



[5] Free school meals are provided to pupils in low income households, and levels provide a widely-used measure of poverty.

Improving attendance and behaviour - breaking the cycle of disadvantage

If schools do not tackle the impact of poverty and disadvanatage early enough and with enough determination, disengagement from learning can become cyclical: poor attendance, and behavioural difficulties or exclusion, lead to underachievement, which in turn results in further disengagement.

The impact of poverty is not, however, inevitable and this section describes how the most effective schools have broken this cycle of disadvantage.

Although the charts below show a strong link between poverty and the performance of each secondary school in Wales at key stage 4 (in terms of attaining the level 2 threshold), they also show that schools facing similar challenges perform very differently and some schools succeed despite facing challenging circumstances. For example, some schools with a free school meals figure of around 40% (around twice the Welsh average of 20%) perform relatively poorly, with only 30% of pupils gaining the level 2 threshold, while in similar schools nearly 90% of pupils gain the same level of qualifications.

Figure 7: Percentage of 15-year-olds achieving the level 2 threshold in 2012

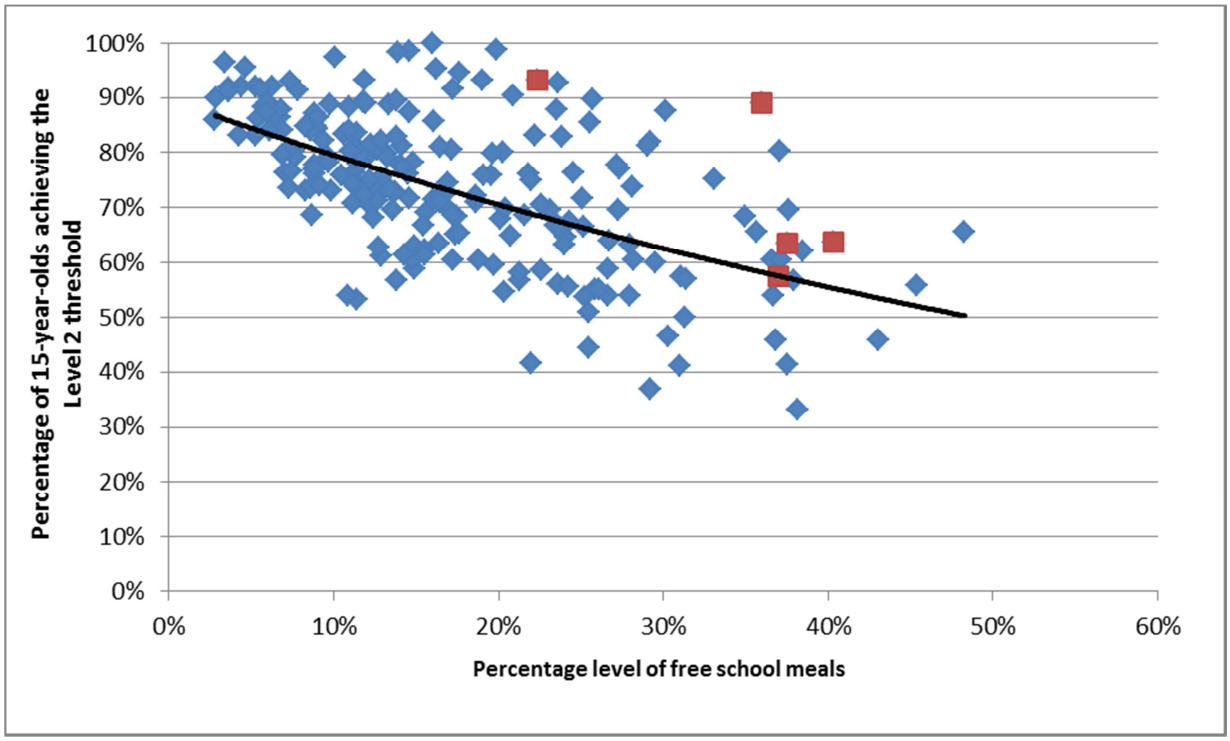
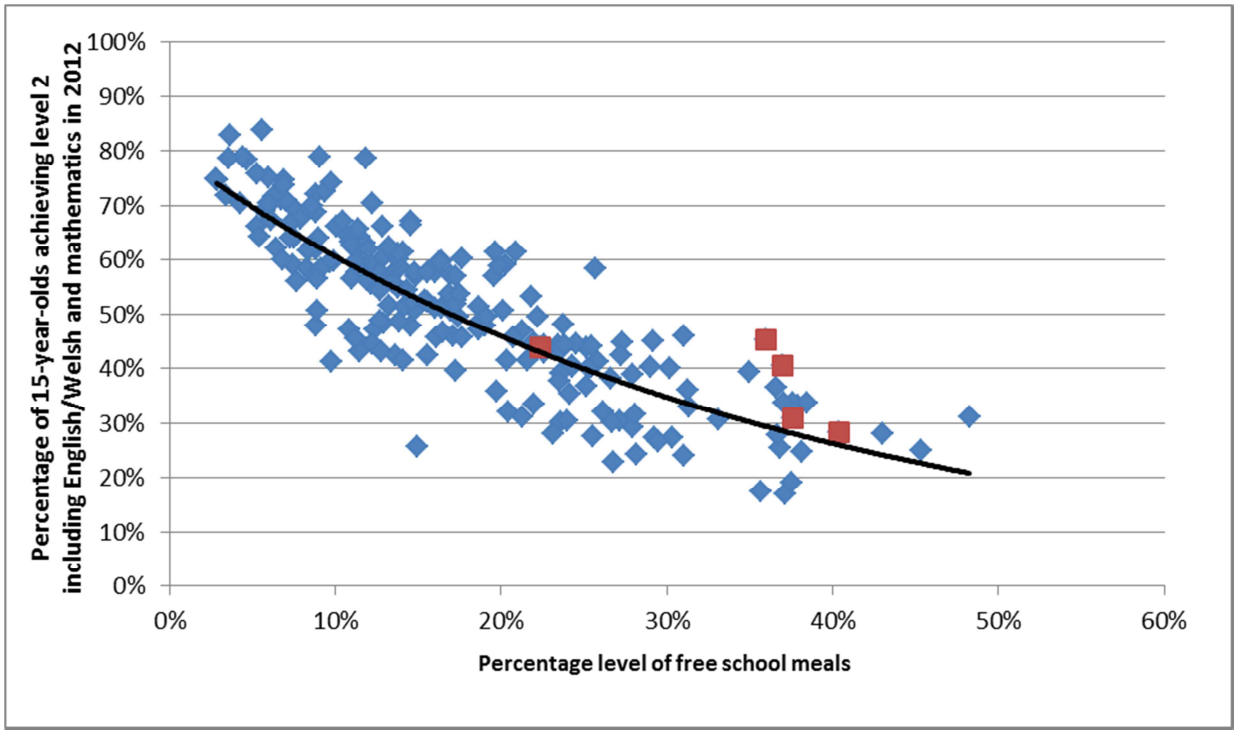


Figure 8: Percentage of 15-year-olds achieving the level 2 threshold including English / Welsh first language and mathematics in 2012



What do effective schools do?

Estyn recently published a survey report ('Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools') that identified a number of best practice case studies from schools that have raised the achievement of disadvantaged learners in challenging circumstances by dealing with poor attendance rates and behaviour. The performance of the secondary schools with case studies is indicated by the red squares in Figure 7 and 8 above. The black line indicates what the 'expected' performance of a school would be taking into account disadvantage (the level of free school meals for the school). Schools above this line perform better than would be expected. These case study schools are performing well against the more challenging performance indicator of the level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics.

These schools not only do what all successful schools do to secure better behaviour and attendance of learners, but they also create an outstandingly positive ethos that allows disadvantaged learners to achieve well. These schools employ strategies specifically designed to combat the factors that disadvantage learners. In particular, effective schools in challenging circumstances take a whole-school, strategic approach to tackling disadvantage – they have a structured, coherent and focused approach to raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners.

These effective schools have a persistent focus on good attendance, punctuality and positive behaviour. They encourage learners' intrinsic motivation. They have suitable

sanctions, but find that reward systems work particularly well, especially to improve attendance. Another key feature of these effective schools is that they have developed their 'inclusion room' into a positive learning environment or a refuge for vulnerable learners.

See Appendix 1 for case studies from Cefn Hengoed and Cwrt Sart schools.

Teacher training and development

These effective schools also develop the expertise of staff to tackle poor behaviour and attendance – they have a culture of sharing best practice, provide opportunities for teachers to observe each other, and have performance management targets that are related to raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners.

Lack of staff commitment to improving behaviour and attendance is a key barrier to overcome in tackling issues of poverty and disadvantage. Staff training and development are needed to tackle this issue. Most successful schools invest significantly in developing the skills of leaders, teachers, support staff and governors to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners.

Many of the successful schools have a strong culture of sharing good practice, both within and outside the school. These schools provide plenty of opportunities for teachers to observe one another and to share approaches to planning across the school. They have spent time on developing whole-school approaches in such areas as teaching literacy skills, promoting emotional wellbeing and raising boys' achievement. They have also identified training opportunities for staff to develop specialist skills, such as those in play therapy or anger management.

Nearly all of the successful schools use performance management to improve the standards and wellbeing of their disadvantaged learners. In these schools, all staff have specific and measurable improvement targets that relate to the school target of raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners. This makes all staff accountable for raising the achievement of disadvantaged learners.

Collaborative working arrangements in community-focused schools

Nearly all schools see themselves as community-focused. However, schools do not have a common understanding of what it means to be community-focused. A few schools have identified challenges in their local community and have strengthened community links to, for example, raise attendance rates, improve behaviour, and raise the level of parental support.

Although learners are offered a range of out-of-hours learning in many schools, only in the few best examples are these extra activities carefully designed to increase

learners' confidence, motivation and self-esteem. Where schools have had the greatest impact on raising learners' achievement, staff plan out-of-hours learning to match the needs of learners and to complement the curriculum. Although most schools work with a range of agencies, school leaders do not co-ordinate multi-agency working systematically enough to ensure that disadvantaged learners are supported in the most effective and timely way. The few schools that engage most effectively in multi-agency working have established protocols and processes for this work, including setting up multi-agency panels.

Most schools identify engaging parents as the biggest challenge in tackling the under-achievement of disadvantaged learners. Many schools, especially primary schools, have a good awareness of the range of problems facing the families of their learners, and a few schools work with parents strategically to improve outcomes for disadvantaged learners. However, a significant minority of schools do not employ a broad enough range of strategies to engage parents.

Additional activity that has the potential to have a positive impact on attendance and behaviour is being developed through the Families First programme. The strength of this work often lies in how well agencies coordinate their work with a family. However, this work is not always well connected with school improvement services at a strategic level.

Please see appendix 2 for a link to further relevant Estyn reports.

Appendix 1 Case studies

case study 6

Cefn Hengoed Community School in Swansea has succeeded in raising attendance by using a range of approaches.

Context of the school

Cefn Hengoed Community School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school on the east side of Swansea. The school lies in the eleventh most deprived ward in Wales and 73% of learners live in 30% of the most deprived parts of Wales. There are 664 learners on roll, 36% of whom are eligible for free school meals. Learner transfers in and out of the school are high.

Strategy

Improving attendance has been a strategic priority that has been explicit in the school development plan since being identified as an inspection recommendation in 2005. At that time, attendance was judged to be unsatisfactory. The inspection team also recommended that the school evaluate and improved curriculum provision in key stage 4 for learners of average and lower ability. The school regarded these recommendations as interrelated.

Key strategic actions to improve attendance have included:

- developing a curriculum relevant to needs at key stage 4;
- transforming the key stage 3 curriculum through changed schemes of work reflecting the skills curriculum;
- motivating Year 9 in the summer term with a programme of accredited key skills; and
- scrutinising the range of attendance issues to identify priorities and establish success criteria to measure improvement.

The school established an attendance focus group with a mission to:

- reduce unauthorised absences;
- define procedures for requests for holidays in term-time;
- reduce truancy and improve punctuality; and
- manage attendance through a business continuity plan.

Actions

Attendance is the first item on the agenda on the governing body, leadership team, senior pastoral team and pastoral team meetings. To improve attendance the school developed a number of approaches:

- a team of pastoral support officers (PSOs), initially established through RAISE funding, was extended and subsequently funded by the school budget. PSOs and the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) hold frequent meetings. Form tutors support the work of the PSOs on attendance. The PSOs and senior pastoral team hold support meetings aimed at targeted parents;
- the pastoral team was restructured and changes made to teaching and learning responsibilities and in the use of associate staff;
- the school trialled an attendance monitoring text messaging system and, following positive feedback from parents, this was developed for the whole school;
- ENGAGE funding (a European funding scheme, run through the Welsh Government) was targeted at the attendance of learners at risk of becoming not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) in key stage 4;
- an attendance focus group met monthly, chaired by the headteacher;
- the school invested in staff training to improve consistent linking of attendance and progress in feedback to learners during the twice yearly academic reviews, to parents in parents' evenings and when completing learner reports;

- the school drew on the good practice of its partner primary schools in terms of learner welfare and support. It developed wrap around provision, including a breakfast club and after-school clubs, designed to develop learners' personal and learning skills; and
- a range of multi-agency working focused on attendance, including the 'So To Do' project, Youth Initiative Project, educational psychology service, behaviour support, Engaging Learners in Swansea and Ethnic Minority Language Advisory Service.

Learners are also rewarded for good attendance through:

- major awards in Annual Awards Evening;
- termly letters to parents for learners with 95%+ attendance; and
- special awards for whole year 100% attendance.

Evaluation

Regular meetings ensure that staff monitor and evaluate attendance strategies. These include:

- weekly monitoring meetings of heads of lower, middle, upper schools;
- PSOs meeting prior to PSO/EWO meeting;
- weekly monitoring meetings of PSOs/EWO; and
- monthly monitoring meetings of the attendance focus group to identify issues from examining data by year group, gender and groups of learners (minority ethnic, special educational needs, looked-after children and learners eligible for free school meals).

Outcomes

Outcomes include:

- improved attendance in every year group year on year: over the last five years, overall attendance levels have increased from 83.4% to 90.9%;
- improved attendance across groups of learners. In the last five years, Year 11 attendance levels have increased from 62% to 90.6%;
- reduction in the percentage of unauthorised absence by year group and overall. Overall, the percentage of unauthorised absences has fallen from 15.8% to 0.8% over the last five years;
- increased progression to post-16 as a result of improved attendance and engagement;
- reduction in the percentage of learners at risk of not being not in education, employment or training and in the percentage leaving without qualifications. There has been a steady reduction in the percentage of learners leaving with no qualification, from 7% in 2005 to 0% in 2011;
- closer relationships with parents/carers and individual learners through sensitive attendance monitoring; and
- improved learner wellbeing due to consistent and continuous engagement through improved attendance.

In key stages 3 and 4, the school's performance has improved appreciably over the last three years. Over the last five years, the percentage of learners achieving the core subject indicator at key stage 3 has improved from 45% to 63%, and at key stage 4 from 23% to 37%. Over the last two years, results at Cefn Hengoed have been well above the average for its family of schools.

case study 7

Cwrt Sart Community Comprehensive School has a successful Student Study Centre to support the needs of disadvantaged learners.

Context of the school

See case study 1 (Page 5) for background information.

Strategy

The development of the study support centre started in the summer term of 2008. The aim of the centre was to:

- further support learners' individual needs;
- to promote learner wellbeing; and
- help all learners to achieve their potential through the creation of a safe learning environment.

The centre demonstrates nurturing principles and practices, which are reflected in all aspects of school life. While the main focus of the centre is on social and emotional development, this strategy also promotes academic achievement for each learner.

Actions

In September 2008, a specialist teacher and a learning support assistant were appointed to the centre. The school devised criteria and processes for referral to the centre.

The centre provides:

- an alternative to permanent exclusion;
- support for learners returning from fixed-term exclusion;
- support for persistent truants and those with 'school phobia';
- support for learners referred from staff because of lack of progress due to persistently poor behaviour;
- reintegration programmes for learners formerly attending learner referral units;
- support programmes for learners with long term sickness or pregnancy;
- support for those learners who have been involved in a managed move from another school;
- a setting for learners awaiting placements in alternative provision;
- a refuge for learners who experienced bullying, stress, peer clashes, bereavement and other influences affecting their attendance and progress (these referrals may have come through other agencies and parents);
- appropriate intervention programmes for those learners with additional learning needs; and
- an intervention programme for those learners who have accessed a nurture group in a primary setting and need further support during transition.

Referrals are made in writing to the additional learning needs co-ordinator or the assistant headteacher using the Centre Referral form. An appropriate and structured individualised programme is then set up for the learner. Each learner will have their own timetabled sessions with regular target setting and reviewing. Where relevant, groups of learners work on issues together, for example in behaviour modification. Links with mainstream classes, parents and other agencies are vital and continue to be an integral part of each learner's programme. In this way, learners in the Centre are not isolated from the whole school community.

The school has introduced a parent support group to improve links with learners' families.

Evaluation

Learners' individual progress is monitored through the school's tracking systems. In addition, Centre staff have weekly meetings to review learners' progress. The school involves the Centre staff in peer observation across the whole school to develop effective practice in working with learners with particular needs. The school analyses feedback from parents, staff, learners, local authority advisers and external agencies.

The school plans to develop this provision to include the extension a paired reading scheme involving the peer mentors and targeted students at the Centre, a peer bereavement group and an anger management group for girls.

Outcomes

The work of the Centre has had a positive impact leading to:

- improved learner attendance;
- a reduction in referrals due to poor behaviour;
- a reduction in referrals to learning support; and
- a reduction in learners requiring multi-agency support;

Eighty-three per cent of learners accessing the centre claimed that they felt more self-confident. Eighty-six per cent of students felt that the support they had received helped them to achieve in the everyday life of the school. Eighty per cent of students felt that their behaviour had been modified and were able to demonstrate this in mainstream lessons. Ninety per cent of learners who have received support during transition stated that they felt less anxious about the changes in school life. All learners who returned to school in Year 11, following an extensive absence of any formal education, have achieved qualifications and moved on to employment or training.

The school has used the evaluation of the Centre to inform other areas of the school's work on developing learners' social and learning skills. As a result of this evaluation, the pre-school breakfast club and break and lunchtime provision now focus on friendship groups, peer mentoring, homework needs and behaviour modification.

Appendix 2

For further information on attendance and behaviour please click on these links to relevant reports by Estyn:

Behaviour in Wales: Good practice in managing challenging behaviour, 2006
Improving attendance, 2006
An evaluation of performance of schools before and after moving into new buildings, 2007
Evaluation of the implementation by schools and LEAs of guidance on exclusions, 2007
Good practice in parental involvement in primary schools, 2009
Tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools: working with the community and other services, 2011
Effective practice in tackling poverty and disadvantage in schools, 2012
The impact of family learning programmes on raising literacy and numeracy levels of children and adults, 2012
A survey of the arrangements for pupils' wellbeing and behaviour management in pupil referral units, 2012

Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour
Response from SNAP Cymru – January 2013

Exclusion from School

During the last two years SNAP Cymru has worked directly with 160 cases of learners being at risk of exclusion, 91 cases of permanent exclusion , 326 cases of fixed term exclusion, 92 cases of illegal exclusion, and 26 exclusion appeals. We recognise that this is only the tip of the iceberg in the context of the national picture. Each of the 695 exclusion cases we have worked on is fully documented. To aid the inquiry, we have looked at a number of cases, concentrating on permanent and illegal exclusions. We hope the information below to be a useful snapshot about how exclusion is being used, and have based our recommendations to the inquiry on this information *(Inquiry into attendance and behaviour tor).*

- 7399 (Additional Need (AN) Behaviour – Age14) – YP permanently excluded from mainstream school. School and LA followed process correctly through to independent appeal, which was upheld. However, family felt that they were not given information/ support prepare for the appeals, and did not understand the process. It also took over six months before the YP returned to full-time education.

- 7645 (AN None identified – Age15) – YP excluded for a fixed term of 10 days. Day before h/she was due to return school phoned parent to inform her that the YP would be permanently excluded unless she volunteered to take him out or find another school. Parent refused so school made the exclusion permanent. Parent asked for details of the investigation carried out by the school (which did not include the YP) in order to prepare for the discipline committee meeting but the school refused. Exclusion upheld and LA involved. YP receiving Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS). The family were not given information, advice support and time to prepare for the discipline committee meeting. They did not understand the process. School did not follow the process and did not carry out an appropriate investigation.

- 8130 (AN ADHD / Autism Spectrum Disorder – Age8) – Child permanently excluded, December 2011. Exclusion upheld. Since then Child has been receiving a mix of home tuition and other activities. Statutory assessment commenced, but has taken considerably more time than it should due to staff illness and staff shortage. Proposed statement finally issued December 2012. Child still has no school placement, and does not receive his/her entitlement to a full time education. The family were not given information, advice support and time to prepare for the discipline committee meeting. They did not understand the process and did not have any indication that it would take so long for their Child's needs to be assessed and to find a suitable, sustainable school placement – ongoing.

- 7980 (AN ADHD / Autism Spectrum Disorder – Age11) – Child permanently excluded from a special needs unit attached to a mainstream school even though h/she was receiving a high level of support. Exclusion upheld and LA involved. Child currently receiving home tuition whilst alternative school placement is secured. The family were not given information, advice support and time to prepare for the discipline committee meeting, and did not see the results of any investigation. They did not understand the process, did not contribute to discussions and had no idea that their child could be permanently excluded from a unit specialising in his/her difficulties.

- 7487 (AN Behaviour – Age13) – Parents informed that YP would be permanently excluded if they did not remove her from the school. Parents did and YP had no school placement until the Education Welfare Service intervened to investigate why the YP was not attending school. Parents confused as they thought the LA would contact them to

help find a suitable school placement. YP out of education for over 4 months. School did not follow correct procedure for exclusion and family were not given any information or support. They did not understand the process.

- 6910 (AN Aspergers Syndrome - Age 15) – Permanent exclusion overturned by independent appeal. YP has started at a different school which was agreed was the best way forward by the family, independent appeal panel and LA. However, LA is unwilling to provide access to school transport, and is not providing the family with information about how to complain about this and the permanent exclusion process which was not properly followed.

Illegal exclusion examples:

- Parent told that her child could no longer attend the school when she tried to complain about a teacher.
- Parent told by school that they would not formally exclude her child, but she should keep him at home for a week or so (the school would phone her). Parent also told that it was 'too difficult' for her child to be included on school trips or to go swimming.
- Parents told their child could only attend 'mornings' as he needed additional support that was not available in the afternoon. Parents were later told that their child could also no longer stay for lunch.
- Parents told not to bring child into school until they (school) can put some support in place to meet his AN.

In the above sample cases:

- Formal process was not followed by schools
- Schools discriminating (disability)
- Families did not understand about illegal exclusions – some thought they were 'doing the right thing' by removing their child from school
- Families were not given access to information, advice or support
- The LA was not informed

Recommendations

SNAP Cymru believes that most educational issues (including exclusion) can be resolved at a much earlier stage without the need for formal legal intervention and is committed to ensuring the provision of services as widely as possible. However we are extremely concerned that families in Wales will be even more disadvantaged when legal aid is withdrawn. Much more needs to be achieved to ensure the full participation of young people and families in planning and decision making which affects them.

1. Exclusion from school should be the resource of last resort
2. No child or young person should be excluded from education without access to free impartial specialist education advice and support.
3. Learners' should have access to advocacy services
4. Permanent exclusion should not take place without an evidence based documented investigation and a hearing to discuss the investigation. It might be worth considering the introduction of a tool kit/checklist to help schools ensure a fair investigation.
5. The learner must be able to give his or her side of the event. This should be documented and included in the evidence based documentation and subsequent hearing
6. Time is granted to schools in order to carry out investigations – possibly suspending the learner for a short period of time to allow the investigation to take place
7. Schools and Local Authorities need more robust complaints procedures to ensure that issues are fully understood and practice is improved.

Background
SNAP Cymru is a national Welsh charity with over 25 years experience in providing bilingual information services to children, young people, vulnerable adults, parents and carers. SNAP Cymru is the only third sector organisation in Wales holding the Community Legal Services (CLS) Specialist Quality Mark (Education). We do not provide services via the legal aid fund, however we do offer quality free face to face advice, information and support to families, children, young people and professionals.

As well as with CLS, SNAP Cymru is proud to hold quality marks with the following nationally recognised quality standard awarding bodies: Investors in People (Bronze) and Investing in Volunteers.

SNAP Cymru is funded through Welsh Government, Local Authority contracts and fundraising. In this time of austerity, many funding streams have reduced or are coming to an end. Working to full capacity already we are most concerned that services may become too stretched when the reduction of Legally Aided advice in education law starts to take effect from April 1st 2013.

- All members of the public needing legal aid funded advice and/or casework in matters of education law (in England & Wales) will be required to call the Community Legal Services Advice helpline. There will be no direct access to a face-to-face provider as there is at present, except from SNAP Cymru – we will do the best we can within a very limited budget across Wales. As there will be only 3 providers of legally aided education law advice in England & Wales. The majority of cases undertaken by the 3 providers will be dealt with over the telephone. It is unlikely that there will be a bilingual service.

- Legally aided advice or casework will only be available when the case involves the special educational needs of a child or young person. No such advice will be available in future in relation to areas of education law in which there is no such element e.g. the vast majority of exclusions, admissions, bullying or complaints cases. Only issues of disability discrimination in education will remain within the scope of legal aid.

These changes will have a serious impact on access to education law advice. Some current providers of this advice will either cease to provide it altogether or will provide it only on a private paying basis. Solicitors and private consultants are very expensive and our experience is that families have felt under real pressure to pay extortionate amounts of money to achieve outcomes which should be achieved without the need for litigation.

Early intervention, accurate information, advice and support, reduces conflict, and informal disagreement resolution reduces stress on families and other partners involved.

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