

Children, Young People and Education Committee – re Pupil Absences

Estyn agreed to provide the Committee with examples of good practice in schools of the support given to different groups of learners who have been affected by general and persistent absence.

Eveswell Primary School

Eveswell Primary School is in Newport. The school was visited as part of Estyn's engagement visit work.

The school caters for pupils from three to 11 years of age. There are currently over 500 pupils on roll, including 94 in the nursery classes.

Around 30% of pupils come from an ethnic minority background. Around 25% of pupils receive support for English as an additional language.

Initially many parents were very anxious about sending their children back to school when schools reopened to all pupils.

The headteachers says many hours went into and is still going into managing messaging to parents. She has tried to be honest and balanced and explains the rationale for all of the schools' decisions.

The school has a proportion of BAME pupils whose fathers are taxi drivers– initially it was very difficult to persuade these families to send their children back to school as five BAME Newport taxi drivers died at the start of the pandemic and this spread fear across the community. Through working in collaboration with the community these pupils are now back in school.

Maindee CP School

Maindee CP School is located within a diverse community in Newport. Maindee CP School was visited as part of Estyn's engagement visit work.

92 percent of pupils speak English as an additional language with a total of 42 languages spoken in total

A significant number of children have Asian, Turkish or Romany heritage

There are approximately 70 children in each year group from Nursery to Year 6

Well-being and attendance

The school appreciated that many families in the community did not have the resources needed during the pandemic. They felt that the community needed so much from the school to keep going forward.

The school provided support for families in many ways including, help with additional food and clothes, reading official letters, making applications for benefits and providing support with routines and behaviour.

Weekly targeted wellbeing calls were provided for children accessing free school meals, vulnerable learners and families in need.

Pupils in Year 5 and 6 had a wellbeing and emotional regulation check which was followed up with a doorstep visit if needed. Pupils were able to share any concerns such as worries about moving on to high school.

During the pandemic the school's most vulnerable children were visited (on the doorstep) twice a week. Staff feel that this has improved relationships with parents and the 'hard to reach' are now engaged and attending school more regularly.

Staff work hard to support the community for example, organising a 'services fair' in the school hall to share information with families about the services and support available to them.

After noticing parents gathering fruit from trees, the school organised a community project to grow vegetables in raised beds on the school site.

One member of staff raised money to provide free meals to those in need who were not entitled to free school meals.

All of these initiatives have reached out to different parts of the school's community and have supported improved pupil attendance.

Porth Community School, RCT

Porth Community School has just over 900 pupils from nursery to Year 11. Most pupils are from a white British background.

This school was monitored in June 2022 by inspectors and removed from significant improvement.

One of the recommendations from the school's core inspection was to improve attendance.

Inspectors made the following evaluations:

- There is a whole school approach to improving pupil attendance and wellbeing. Senior leaders provide suitable training for all staff. The appointment of whole school attendance officers, family engagement officers and the development of the school wellbeing team have strengthened the school's capacity to improve attendance. This also ensures that there is a consistent approach to improving attendance across the school.
- Staff provide carefully planned provision to help remove barriers to learning. For example, older pupils in the secondary phase have regular meetings with the attendance officer to discuss what the barriers to being in school regularly are. This has identified a variety of pupil needs which the wellbeing team then provide appropriate intervention and support for.
- Leaders robustly monitor and track pupil attendance and wellbeing. Live tracking data is used effectively and leaders ensure that appropriate intervention supports pupils in need well. Daily discussions between professionals helps staff to be aware of any difficulties that a pupil may face so that suitable support can be given to support engagement in learning.
- Dedicated staff members work closely with key staff, pupils, parents and outside agencies to provide appropriate support and bring about improvement. The wellbeing team carefully tracks and monitors the attendance of pupils with persistent absence. They hold fortnightly attendance review panel meetings and discuss and plan appropriate support collectively. This approach has led to improvements in attendance for many pupils.
- There are suitable reward systems in place to promote good attendance across the school. For example, younger pupils have opportunity to take Ted the Attendance Bear home when they get 100% attendance. Older pupils enjoy regular attendance assemblies where good and improved attendance are suitably praised.
- Provision to reduce exclusion rates is strong. The school nurture provisions in both the primary and secondary phase provide effective support to support pupils to re-engage in their learning through a programme of well thought out wellbeing and learning intervention.