

APPENDIX 3

Position Statement

The Welsh Government in their recent media coverage source (BBC Wales) highlighted one in six secondary pupils are regularly absent from school. The average half days sessions missed in 2022 /23 was 16.3% for children 11-15 years this is three times higher than the pre- pandemic period in 2018 /19. The gender gap has decreased between boys 12% and girls 13% levels of engagement with their education. A task force has now been set up by the minister for education Jeremy Miles MS in response to these ongoing level of concern across Wales.

A1.0 Denbighshire has seen a drop in levels of overall attendance in schools between 3 % and 12 % , many of the schools however are regaining their position pre- pandemic and many schools in Denbighshire are at levels being achieved in 2018/19 and higher in some cases.

A1.1 Currently the overall performance of Denbighshire is 90.1% , the average across Wales from September to November 2023 is 91.3%

The pre- pandemic year 2018/19		Academic Year 2022 / 23		Sept to November 2023	
Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
94.8%	93.7%	92%	87.1%	92.2%	86.9%

A1.2 The data below outlines the current school year Sept –November 2023 absence rates from (Stats Wales) for absenteeism of secondary age pupils 2022/23 which outlines Denbighshire percentage of half day sessions missed due to unauthorised absence at 4.2% and for all absences at 12.8 % The current school year data below indicates a reduction in overall absence month on month which will impact on the final year figures with a possible reduction in all absences in secondary schools.

Current School Year 2023

	Primary absences					
	September		October		November	
	Sessions	% of possible attendance	Sessions	% of possible attendance	Sessions	% of possible attendance
Authorised absence	11,959	1.5%	13,265	1.7%	12,307	1.5%
Unauthorised absence	7,944	1.0%	6,062	0.8%	4,922	0.6%
Total absence	19,903	2.5%	19,327	2.4%	17,229	2.2%
	Secondary absences					
	September		October		November	
	Sessions	% of possible attendance	Sessions	% of possible attendance	Sessions	% of possible attendance
Authorised absence	16,942	2.3%	20,867	2.8%	19,745	2.6%
Unauthorised absence	9,760	1.3%	11,876	1.6%	10,970	1.5%
Total absence	26,702	3.6%	32,743	4.4%	30,715	4.1%

A1.3 Throughout the last two school years' schools and the education welfare service have actively worked together to reduce absence levels post pandemic, numbers of referral to the service have increased by over a third. **Current levels of allocation to the four staff in the service are above 25 cases each requiring intensive intervention working with schools,** families, and other Denbighshire services and third sector services.

A1.4 The additional staff appointed through the Welsh Government LAEG grant have increased the service staffing with two family engagement officers working across the county. The focus of the roles is to provide a greater level of daily contact with families and children assisting with routines, management of home to school plans, working with staff in school to address any issues that impact on the pupil attending school and looking at the detail of planning to improve engagement and reduce barriers to learning.

A1.5 An additional grant for 23/24 relating to school attendance from the Welsh Government has also been received to appoint two attendance support officers working with the education welfare service to increase capacity and manage the higher levels of referral from schools.

A1.6 Schools also have named education welfare officers attending their multi-agency meetings (MAP) where vulnerable pupils are discussed offering additional support and interventions some of these pupils receive help from the EWO assigned to the high school MAP but also work alongside colleagues in schools, education services, Llywbrau service, Educational Psychologists and Behaviour Support and importantly Children Services and health to address the complex needs of vulnerable children.

A1.7 The EWO service have in place a rota each week where schools can seek advice or request intervention and attendance at meetings in any school each week with cases that require immediate attention. These can be relating to, social and community needs, family breakdown, school admission, children missing education Children Missing in Education (CME) where families leave the authority with no destination provided to schools or services.

A1.8 Schools causing concern do receive contact and reports from the education welfare service to discuss and address their data on attendance on their school management system (SIMS). This highlights issues and links to attendance codes patterns, pupil level concerns, and other distinguishing patterns relating to school procedures and data collection.

A1.9 54 % of contact and calls to the EWO helpdesk relate to mental health concerns, social anxiety and self – harm suicidal ideation of young people previously this was significantly lower in terms of main reason for contact.

Since January 2022 87 % of referrals to the EWO service from schools identify mental health as a significant factor in the pupils needs.