

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	6 May 2025
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Diane King (Lead Member for Education, Children and Young People)
Head of Service	Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
Report author	Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
Title	Additional Education Funding of £500K

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The report details the intended spending of the £500k transferred to Education to develop learner wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, and support learners in poverty. This is in response to the agreed amendment at full council on February 20th, 2025

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To provide information on the proposed spending of the additional 500k to support learner wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and to support learners in poverty.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 Scrutiny are invited to discuss the details of this report and to support the proposed plan to develop learner wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, and support learners in poverty

4. Report details

- 4.1 School attendance rates in 2018/19 pre- pandemic school year ended with primary schools achieving an overall figure of 94.8% and secondary schools 93.7%. Combined attendance was at 94.25%
- 4.2 The Wales average attendance for Primary / Secondary combined for the academic year September 2023 to June 2024 was 90.6%. This is an increase from 89.2% over

the same period in 2022/23 across Wales. In Denbighshire the overall figure for Primary / Secondary combined for the academic year 2023 / 2024 was 89.9 %, which equates to 0.7 % less than the Wales average. Attendance is a main priority in Denbighshire schools.

4.3 Improving school attendance is the agreed priority for this school year for all teams within Education services, working with schools to monitor and support pupils' engagement.

There is no single solution, one group or one service that can address this issue.

4.4 The additional funding will in turn address many issues children deal with daily: apathy, despondency and more worrying mental health and well-being which has increased significantly since 2018 onwards. Most if not all referrals from schools to the Education Welfare Service have a repeating theme of the above issues.

4.5 A whole school approach is common across Denbighshire schools where all staff regardless of role can make a difference to a child in a school setting that places the child central to all its work with a common interest of learning, care and well- being.

4.6 The whole school approach acknowledges that learner wellbeing, attendance, behaviour, and support for learners in poverty are all intrinsically linked and cannot be separated, and the agreed plan may focus on one area but will impact on all other areas.

4.7 Although the additional funding is for the Education Department we always work in close collaboration with schools and discussed this funding with a focused group of Head Teachers. Their views were as follows:

- Increase capacity of Family Link Worker Support
- Additional staff to work with families
- A need to focus not only on getting children into school but keeping them in school.
- Increase Education Welfare Team Capacity
- Increase Family Engagement Officers to develop parental engagement

4.8 An initial focus on attendance will improve the wellbeing of our most disengaged families and also focus on families who may be living in poverty. In this first year we will not be able to address all areas but will focus on certain ones.

4.9 In January 2024 Estyn published a thematic report on improving attendance in

secondary schools. The outcome highlighted the areas both schools and the local authority should focus on. They were as follows

Schools should:

- Strengthen planning to strategically improve attendance, including making effective use of data to identify trends and in planning long term approaches to improving pupils' attendance
- Strengthen their approach to monitoring, evaluating and improving attendance
- Strengthen their work with parents/carers to explain why good attendance is important
- Develop more effective methods to gather the views of pupils who do not attend school regularly
- Ensure that teaching and the curriculum offer engages pupils in learning

Local authorities should:

- Provide schools with regular and effective challenge and support to improve pupils' attendance and help evaluate the impact of their work
- Ensure that local authority interventions build on work already carried out by schools
- Work with schools to support them to work with parents/carers to understand the importance of good attendance

4.10 The education proposal aims to address the recommendations raised by Estyn and meet the needs of schools to improve attendance and in turn improve behaviour and wellbeing:

Description	Cost	Impact
System modernisation: Transform the analysis of attendance data using business intelligence and data visualization tools e.g. Power BI	£36k	This will support officers and schools to address the considerations from Estyn during the recent ELV to effectively use a range of attendance information for groups of learners to identify trends, and target resources and support across schools. It will also support officers to consistently monitor live data to robustly holding school leaders to account in their use of pupil's attendance data.

<p>Family Link workers (ages 3-7)</p> <p>Increase staffing within this early-intervention team which builds positive relationships with parents from very early on in a child's learning journey and right through the 3-7 age range. This enables the team to recognise when a family are heading towards crisis and provide early intervention.</p>	<p>£148k</p>	<p>The Heckmann Curve demonstrates that the highest economic returns come when we invest in the early intervention with children and families. Investing in this area improves school attendance, and supports children's development and wellbeing, particularly in the most deprived areas.</p>
<p>Family Engagement Officers (ages 9-12)</p> <p>Additional officers to work with families to support attendance in upper primary school and transition into secondary school. Issues within this age range can lead to significant non-attendance in secondary schools. These families are often those experiencing poverty.</p>	<p>£91k</p>	<p>Supporting the transition into secondary school through an early intervention in the upper primary year groups improves attendance longer term. This should tackle the issues we are currently experiencing where attendance issues beginning in year 7 become magnified in older year groups and entrenched in Years 10 /11 which is consistent across Wales.</p>
<p>Behaviour Support in Secondary Schools (ages 11-16)</p> <p>Additional specialist staffing within the Denbighshire School's Outreach Service to provide direct support for pupils, training opportunities for school staff, and improved analysis of intelligence to identify trends and patterns.</p>	<p>£114k</p>	<p>This proposal will support children to improve their own behaviour in school. It will also look to a sustainable model in providing more training for school staff to understand and support children with social, emotional and behavioural issues, aiming to reduce reliance on external services.</p>
<p>Assistant Educational Psychologist</p> <p>To undertake neuro-profiling with children not attending school, or experiencing behavioural or wellbeing issues in school due to issues which may relate to neurodiversity. Supporting delivery of the new Emotionally Based School Avoidance training.</p>	<p>£52k</p>	<p>Children who are currently sitting on neurodevelopmental waiting lists will have a needs-led approach to support them within our schools, improving their attendance, behaviour and wellbeing, without being reliant upon diagnosis. Early identification and support of children who may develop EBSA.</p>
<p>Education Welfare Officer</p> <p>An additional officer to work with the most severe cases of non-attendance in schools, where more specialist knowledge is required to support and</p>	<p>£59k</p>	<p>This will provide highly targeted support to those with the most entrenched non-attendance issues that require statutory intervention through the FPN process and courts. This</p>

challenge families, and to prepare for and attend legal proceedings. Over the years, this service has been reduced due to funding challenges. These officers deal with fixed penalty notices and school attendance orders.	increase in the core team who are currently managing high caseloads and increasing demands from schools based on the school attendance data. This will increase capacity to address this demanding and complex area of work with families to support pupils to return and engage with school and education,
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5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1 This area of work contributes towards making Denbighshire a place where young people want to live and work and have the skills to do so. It also contributes to make Denbighshire a place where young people can flourish and have the best start in life regardless of any issues or challenges they may be facing.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

- 6.1 There will be no additional cost for other services but there will be a positive impact on some services.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1 A Well-being Impact Assessment is not required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

- 8.1. Input from Head Teachers, Principal Education Psychologist, Head of the Pupil referral Unit and Inclusion Officer, Lead Education Social Worker, Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead and Principal Education Manager.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

- 9.1 As set out within section 6 of the report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1 The risks of not achieving the WG and LA strategic objective will potentially see a lower number of children accessing school regularly in Denbighshire thus impacting their wellbeing, this work will mitigate against those risks.

11. Power to make the decision.

11.1 Education Act 1996 – Section 444

11.2 Scrutiny's powers in respect of this matter are detailed in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution.