

Huw Lewis AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ann Jones, AM
Chair, Children and Young People's Committee
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

18 December 2014

Dear Ann,

**Progress report to the Children, Young People and Education Committee Report:
Inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour, August 2013**

A year has passed since I wrote to you providing my formal response to the committee's inquiry into Attendance and Behaviour. I consider this a timely opportunity to update you on progress towards the accepted recommendations in the report.

In September 2013 new regulations relating to mandatory training for governors and clerks to governing bodies came into force. This mandatory training includes a module on 'understanding data' which in turn, includes information on understanding attendance data and the importance of monitoring pupil attendance and absences.

Additionally, in February 2014 the Welsh Government published the National Model for Regional Working. The National Model recognises the role of consortia in supporting and challenging local authorities for the purposes of 'school improvement'. This challenge and support role extends to school improvement linked to learner wellbeing, such as behaviour and attendance. However, responsibility for delivering the Educational Welfare Service, including EOTAS provision, will remain with the local authority.

I have provided £800,000 to consortia to secure improvements in school attendance over two years. The grant enabled consortia to work with their authorities and schools to develop and embed effective practices which can secure longer-term improvements in school attendance. The grant concludes this month and will be evaluated in 2015. Elements of best practice identified by the evaluation process will be considered for dissemination as a case studies via the Learning Wales website.

Regarding the recommended evaluation of bullying and non-attendance to determine possible correlations, my officials have discussed with Estyn the possibility of the inspectorate undertaking this work as part of its annual remit. However, Estyn confirmed the data is not available in the form required to allow for a correlation to be demonstrated.

Although the Welsh Government recommends schools monitor and record incidents of bullying it is not a statutory requirement.

I have remitted Estyn to review attendance at a primary school level. As part of this review Estyn will be carrying out case studies on a selection of individual schools. If bullying has been an issue and the school has undertaken specific strategies to tackle this, improvements may be reflected in their attendance data. Once I have received the review report, my officials will consider how the work might inform potential future monitoring of bullying and non-attendance rates.

Work towards the remaining recommendations made in the report continues. This includes a review of the Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance; and an amended guidance document is due to be published for public consultation in spring 2015. The revised guidance will re-emphasise the importance of early intervention with children and families and place a greater emphasis on the importance of behaviour management techniques.

The emphasis on behaviour management continues in the work being undertaken in respect of the behaviour management module in the Masters in Educational Practice Programme. The refreshed Behaviour Management Learning Pack is due to be launched during spring term 2015. My officials are also working with Professor David Reynolds, who specialises in educational effectiveness, to review the resources currently available via the Behaviour and Attendance Improvement area of the Learning Wales website. This review will help to ensure that practitioners have access to the latest research and exemplar case studies focussed on behaviour management.

Please see the attached Annex for updates on the remaining recommendations from the committee's report.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Huw Lewis in cursive script.

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Minister for Education and Skills
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Recommendation	Update
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>Further to the revised Behaving and Attending Action Plan 2011, the Committee recommends that the Welsh Government develops an overarching national attendance and behaviour strategy which takes forward existing good practice and against which progress is regularly monitored.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>The Committee recommends that an increased emphasis be placed on evidence-based behaviour management training within initial teacher training. Evidence-based pupil behaviour modules should also form a core element of continuous professional development. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government works with key stakeholders (including regional consortia) to undertake an audit of need within the existing teaching workforce and to develop action plans to deal with any skills gaps.</p>	<p>The refreshed Behaviour Management Learning Pack for the Masters in Educational Practice Programme is due to be launched during spring term 2015. My officials are also working with Professor David Reynolds, who specialises in educational effectiveness, to review the resources currently available via the Behaviour and Attendance Improvement Area of the Learning Wales website. This review will help to ensure that practitioners have access to the latest research and exemplar case studies focussed on behaviour management.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>The Committee recommends that all governors should be provided with training on effective approaches to improve pupil attendance and address problem behaviour. They should also be trained on their roles in</p>	<p>In September 2013 new regulations relating to mandatory training for governors and clerks to governing bodies came into force. This mandatory training includes a module on 'understanding data' which in turn, includes information on understanding attendance data and the importance of monitoring pupil attendance and absences.</p>

<p>this regard and how to understand and utilise school level data to challenge and support their schools to achieve improvement.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>The Committee recommends that regional consortia should have a more clearly defined role in respect of improving pupil attendance and behaviour. The Welsh Government should further explore the benefits of this approach with specific reference to the other recommendations in this report.</p> <p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with the necessary partners to explore the feasibility of placing the responsibility for strategic development, oversight of delivery and funding for education welfare and behaviour support services at a regional level.</p>	<p>In February 2014 the Welsh Government published the National Model for Regional Working. The National Model recognises the role of consortia in supporting and challenging local authorities for the purposes of ‘school improvement’. This challenge and support role extends to school improvement linked to learner wellbeing, such as behaviour and attendance. However, responsibility for delivering the Educational Welfare Service, including EOTAS provision, remains with the local authority.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>The Welsh Government should ensure that schools, local authorities and regional consortia place an emphasis on early intervention with individual children and families.</p>	<p>Work to refresh the Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance is underway; an amended guidance document is due to be published for public consultation in spring 2015. The revised guidance will re-emphasise the importance of early intervention with children and families and place a greater emphasis on the importance of behaviour management techniques.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p>	<p>Work to take forward two key initiatives which will support the Educational Welfare Service in</p>

<p>The Welsh Government should ensure that evidence-based approaches to improving attendance and addressing problem behaviour are in place and implemented in all Welsh schools. The potential for a strengthened role for regional consortia in respect of mainstreaming good practice should be explored.</p>	<p>Wales continues. I anticipate publishing an induction pack for new starters to the EWS; to publish National Occupational Standards for all Educational Welfare Officers in early 2015.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government explores how to utilise any correlation between rates of bullying and non-attendance in schools.</p>	<p>Although the Welsh Government recommends that schools monitor and record incidents of bullying, it is not a statutory requirement. At present, data is not available in a form that would allow for a correlation between bullying and non-attendance rates to be demonstrated.</p> <p>I have remitted Estyn to review attendance at a primary school level which will involve them in carrying out case studies on a selection of schools. If a school has undertaken specific strategies relating to anti-bullying an improvement may be reflected in their attendance statistics. Once I have received the report, my officials will consider how the work might inform potential future monitoring of bullying and non-attendance rates.</p> <p>Additionally, I have established the All-Wales Anti-Bullying Leadership Group which will provide a strategic perspective on bullying in schools and the wider community, and its links to hate crime.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>The Welsh Government should ensure that there is a clear focus on maintaining and improving attendance rates during the transition between primary and secondary school. The potential for a strengthened role for regional consortia should be explored in this respect.</p>	<p>As described in the update provided for Recommendations 4 and 6, the National Model recognises the role of consortia in supporting and challenging local authorities for the purposes of 'school improvement'. This challenge and support role extends to school improvement linked to learner wellbeing, such as behaviour and attendance. However, responsibility for delivering the Educational Welfare Service, including EOTAS provision, remains with the local authority.</p> <p>Work to refresh the Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance is underway; and an amended guidance document is due to be published for public consultation in spring 2015. The revised guidance will re-emphasise the importance of early intervention with children and families and place a greater emphasis on the importance of behaviour management techniques.</p>

<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>The Welsh Government should review the evidence of how effective the use of ‘first day responses’ to pupil absences are with a view to issuing strengthened guidance in this regard.</p>	<p>Data on first-day responses is not routinely collected by the Welsh Government and although first-day responses are promoted in the All-Wales Attendance Framework, information on which schools use first-day responses is fragmented. The revised Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance will ensure that emphasis is placed on best practice for first-day responses.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11</p> <p>Based on the evidence we received, the Committee strongly recommends that the Minister evaluates alternative, more positive strategies to fixed penalty notes before introducing regulations and makes publically available the evidence base for the implementation of fixed penalty notices, should that decision be taken forward.</p>	<p>Rejected</p>
<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government should work with regional consortia and other key stakeholders to explore the feasibility and benefits of developing and commissioning Educated Otherwise than at School (EOTAS) provision on a regional basis and potentially on an all Wales basis.</p>	<p>The National Model sets out the role and responsibilities of regional consortia. Although the consortia will have a role in supporting and challenging local authorities in respect of school improvement; the delivering of Educational Welfare Services, including EOTAS provision remains with the local authority.</p>