

**Children, Young People and Education Committee**  
**Request for information on Pupil attendance & training for school governors**  
**Response from: Vale of Glamorgan Council**

April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team

*How the VOG is working with schools to monitor and improve the attendance of pupils who have not returned to school since the two periods of general school closures, have done so on a very limited basis, or have been regularly/persistently absent; and data on the numbers and absence rates of these pupils*

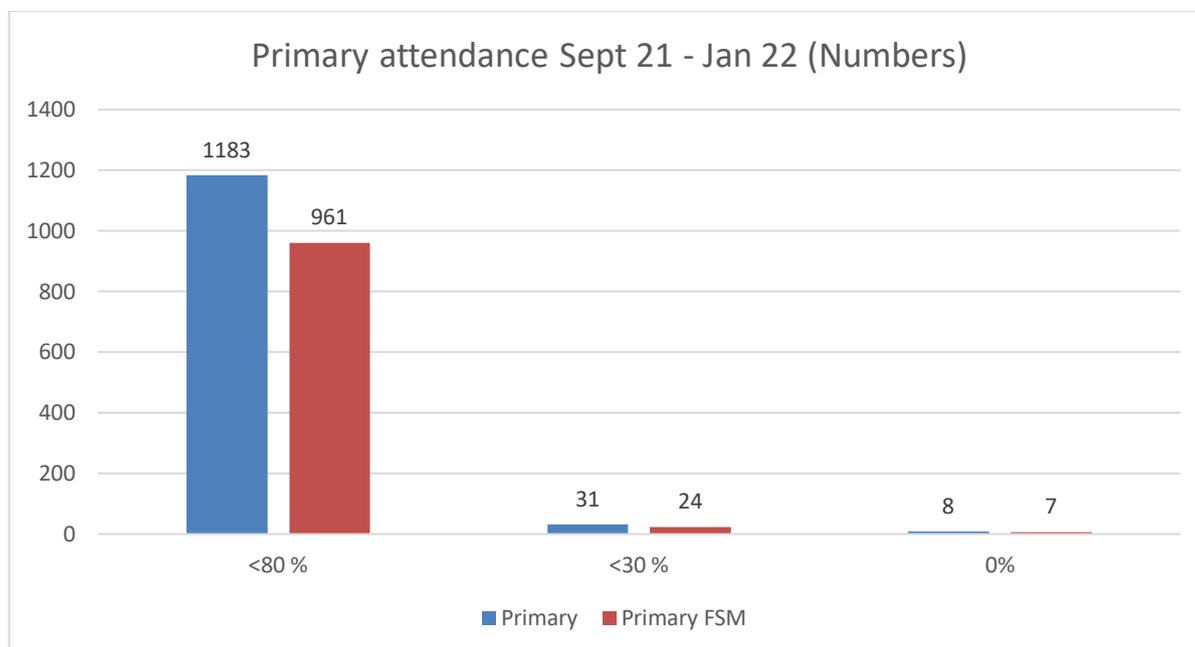
**Overall Autumn Data – Vale of Glamorgan (VOG)**

**Autumn term Sept - Dec 2021 SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

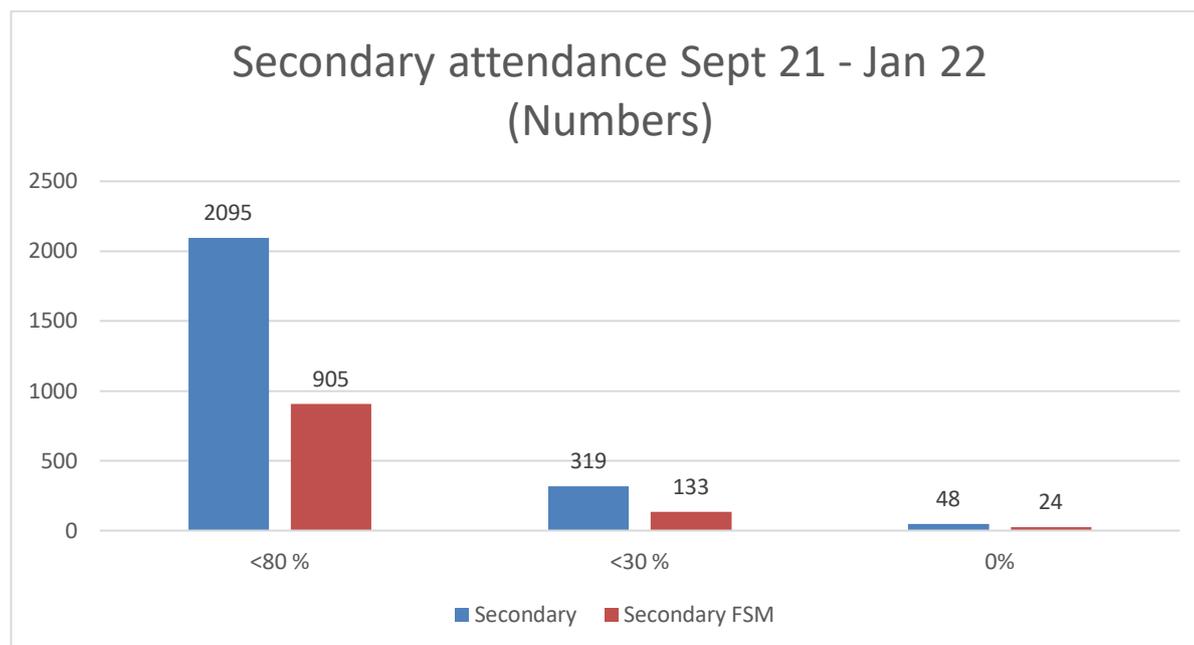
**Target figure 94 %** Overall attendance rate 86.5 %  
 Approved absence rate 8.7 %  
 Unapproved absence rate 4.9 %

**Autumn term Sept - Dec 2021 PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

**Target figure 94%** Overall attendance rate 90.4 %  
 Approved absence rate 7.8 %  
 Unapproved absence rate 1.7 %



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### Attendance – Covid related changes:

Covid has necessitated a significant change in approach to what used to be seen as minor illnesses (e.g. coughs, colds and even flu). Pre-covid, many learners with these ailments would have been in school, whereas now, this is discouraged as the symptoms could indicate covid and a symptomatic child's attendance could undermine overall pupil and staff attendance through spread and fear of infection from someone with apparent symptoms. School Risk Assessments state that only healthy staff and learners are to be in school.

Additionally, many parents now work from home (WFH) making it easier for sick children to take time off school as parental care is now always in place in WFH households. Given the aversion to risk and the increased availability of parental supervision in the school day, the lower overall attendance rate is no surprise.

These factors, plus the ongoing WG framework guidance (see below) which has been in existence since schools reopened in April 2021, means that it is not 'business as usual' and so, for many parents, the pre-covid deterrent effect of penal measures for low attendance no longer exists.

### Welsh Government advice:

*Under the current circumstances the Welsh Government's view remains that punitive measures, including fines, may not be appropriate, except in a small number of cases relating to persistent absence which are unrelated to the COVID-19 pandemic; where there are concerns about the welfare of the child; and where there have been extensive efforts to try and re-engage with the family by the school and / or the Education Welfare Service. Authorities should continue to follow guidance set out in the **All Wales Attendance Framework**.*

*Any concerns about engagement, or the welfare of a learner, should be followed up immediately by the school. Concerns should only be escalated to the Education Welfare Service after the school has made every attempt to engage the family. During these times a multi-agency approach is critical and if the school has any concerns about the harm, neglect or abuse of learners this should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Person who will liaise with children's services and other agencies as appropriate.*

*Punitive measures should only be used where all other attempts to engage have been exhausted. Schools may wish to use a bespoke plan to support transition to face to face learning at the earliest opportunity. Children and young*

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*people under 18 are no longer required to self-isolate unless they have symptoms themselves or have tested positive, or are requested to do so by TTP or have received advice from their clinician. However we recognise that some anxiety will remain amongst some families around the risks of COVID-19. Engagement should be ongoing with the family so that schools, settings and local authorities understand any barriers to learners returning to school and identify any further support that may be needed to enable a full return to the educational setting at the earliest opportunity.*

Whilst this remains advice in the public domain and, whilst measures such as those necessitated by the Omicron variant such as: mask wearing and lateral flow testing etc, WFH for Wales where possible etc. remain in force, it would be very contentious to compel attendance on the basis that learner or parents covid-based anxieties are unreasonable.

There are also a small, but significant number of learners, who have family abroad and who have been unable to make home visits for the past two years but are now able to do so and are requesting extended periods of absence. Again, there are multiple and complex issues at play here. Provided that these absences are monitored by the schools, safeguards are in place, academic support is provided and the child is kept on roll, they will avoid becoming CME or requiring transportation to a new school out of their local area on their return.

The Inclusion Team supports schools with advice and guidance as to the safeguarding, religious, cultural and education factors to consider ensuring that any extended absences are approved only when it appears to be in the learner's best interests and is implemented in a way that is transparent and fair using objective criteria and WG guidance.

In VOG, the focus has been on supporting attendance but also on ensuring that learners do not make a knee-jerk decision with potentially negative long-term implications, for both the learners, schools and the LA by electing to become home educated (EHE).

Comparative data on the numbers of deregistrations by LA will be available after February 2022 but, in past years, the VOG approach has been shown to lead to significantly fewer deregistrations into EHE than in many other LAs.

Short-term EHE can lead to disruption to learning as well as pressure on school admissions and transport. We have deliberately sought to encourage ways of maintaining learners in formal education where it is in the learner's interest to do so and where the poor attendance and risk of EHE is covid-linked. In such cases, the LA supports the learner, family and school by way of a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP). Reviews of these occur at 6-8 week periods and, in many cases, have enabled learners to access remote school provision as well as additional support from the Attainment, Wellbeing and Engagement (AWE) team.

The AWE team was established January 2021 in direct response to covid and the envisaged return to school scenario when schools might reopen but where many learners would have become disengaged / dysregulated or would be unlikely to return at pre covid levels. In April 2022 (when schools did fully reopen), although shielding ended, there were many learners fearful of return. WG advice limited any penal options regarding non-returners to the usual gatekeeping criteria for LAs of ensuring that penalties are only applied when it is in the public interest to do so.

The Inclusion Team is currently supporting 56 learners via AWE (January 2022) with a further 8 learners pending allocation once new officers are fully inducted. Many of these learners are from potentially vulnerable groups (a very high ratio of FSM and non / low attendance linked to physical / mental health needs). Some learners have also found managing their behaviours difficult since returning to school and the AWE Team also supports such learners where there is a risk of exclusion.

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## FSM support – Carousel Days

We also set up additional alternative provision as part of the Inclusion/ AWE remit including 2 days of a wellbeing carousel day based out a central Barry Alternative Provider. The 2 wellbeing carousel days were so predominantly for FSM learners that we made lunch provision part of the actual activities to ensure a fair and discreet FSM provision on these days. All those who attended in the Autumn term sessions were FSM 7/7 or 100%, of the nine places offered 7/9 or 78% were FSM.

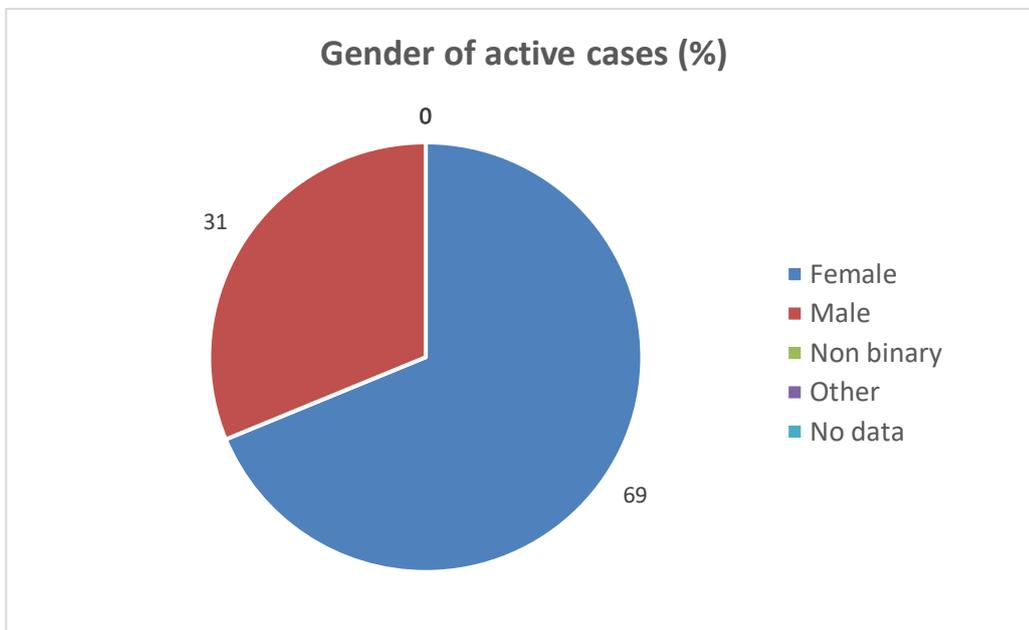
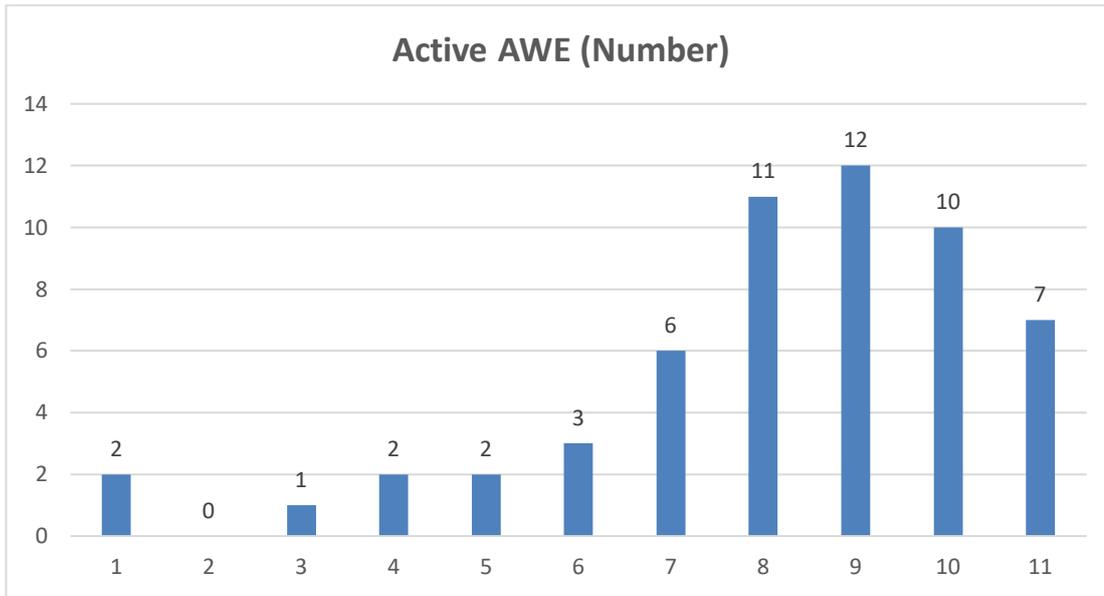
As at 20th October 2021 of the 44 cases open to AWE 61.3% were FSM. But as at January 2022 the open AWE cases of 56 represent 54.7% FSM.

The AWE Team sits within the Inclusion Team which itself incorporates the remit of the Education Welfare Service. Referrals come to AWE via the Inclusion Team where non-attendance is the primary concern or via the Social, Emotional and Mental Health Panel (SEMHP) which schools can refer in to.

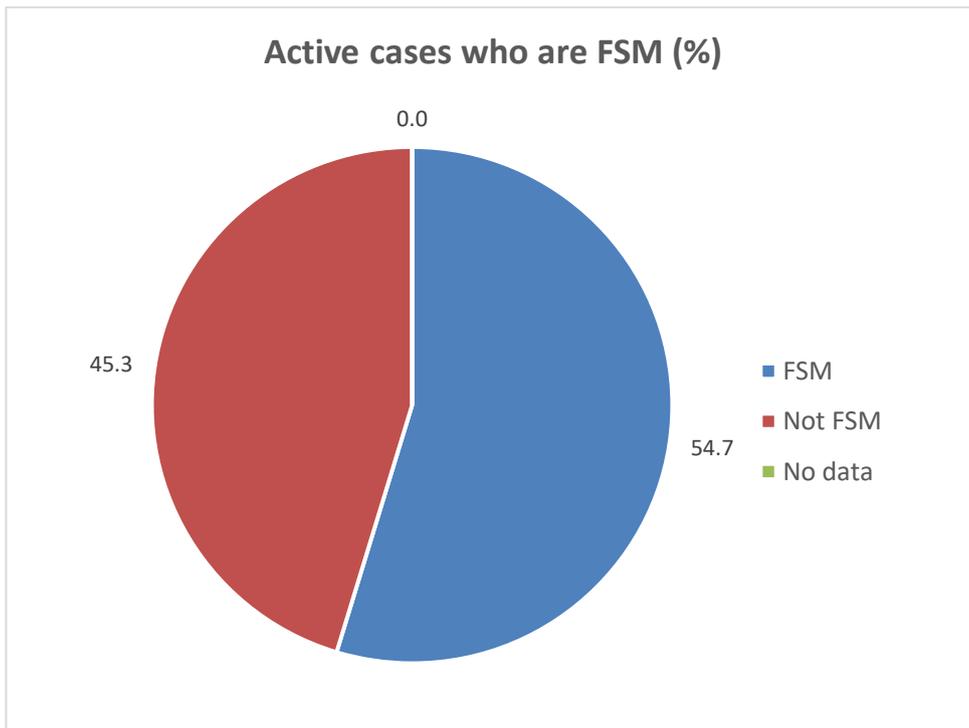
Cases open to AWE have allocated LSAs or teachers and a standard offer of 3 hours per week of bespoke support to encourage attendance and minimise disruption to learning from non-attendance. A key focus is on wellbeing. All the team are trained in a trauma-informed approach, mental health first aid and a range of wellbeing approaches. The team support the ongoing school offer and contact the child's school sending a weekly report to ensure and enable correct coding/ mirroring on offsite attendance sessions as well as regular 6 weekly PSP reviews. The AWE Team are all able to work remotely and learners are also given the resources to do this (by their schools) but also makes use of school sites where possible. In addition, sessions are held in the children's homes and at the LA funded temporary wellbeing hub building in central Barry.

Internal step-up, step-down and liaison meetings occur on a weekly basis to discuss learners who are not progressing or where the AWE provision is not improving the situation. Where learners do not make progress under AWE, the Inclusion Officer reviews the case to consider other routes of action such as multi-agency referrals to Social Services (via a MARF) or a prosecution under the Education Act (provided that covid forms no basis for the non-attendance).

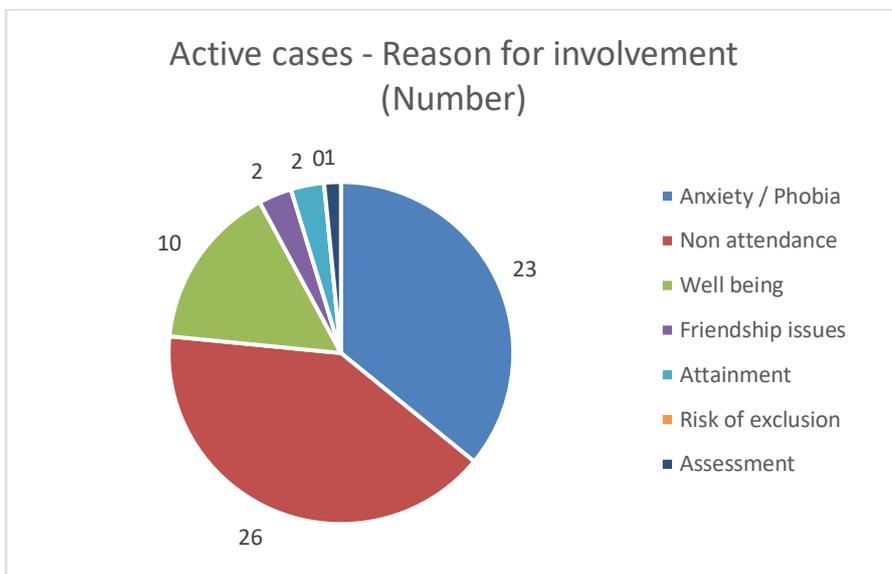
# April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team



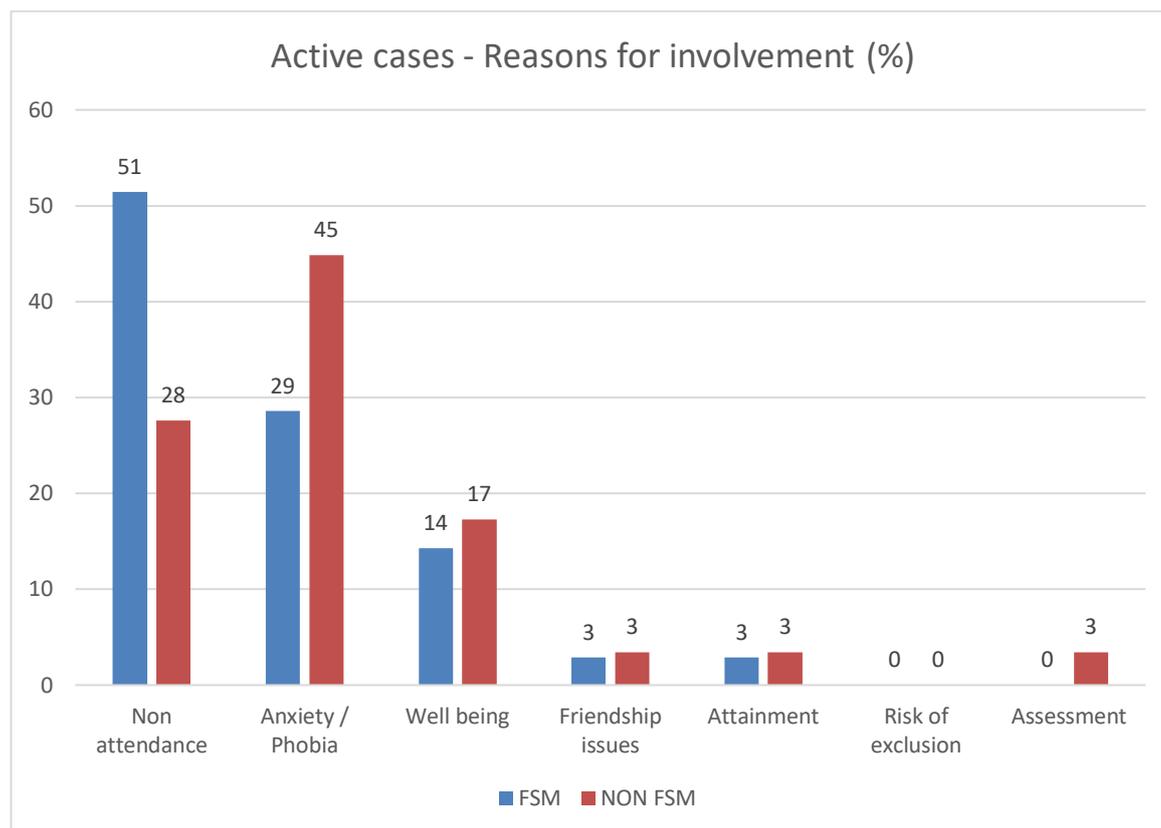
# April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team



As at January 2022 it is also clear that AWE is supporting FSM non-attendance issues for mental health and more generalised school refusal and disengagement reasons.



## April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team



The Inclusion Team complete a range of universal and targeted actions to ensure schools are aware of the LA's role, how to access support advice / guidance and how we are able to monitor / challenge areas of concern. In some schools, we run regular 'Inclusion Surgeries' with Inclusion Team officers and Heads of Year. Termly liaison meetings are held with secondary schools where persistent absences and low and non-attenders are discussed. Regular communications are emailed to each school to keep them up-to-date with changes. Due to the large numbers of VOG pupils with attendance under 80%, the LA is having (in line with what is happening across Wales) to focus its efforts on unapproved absences non-attenders.

Each school is encouraged to adhere to first-day absence monitoring good practice and to ensure that regular sightings are made of any learner who is not attending at all. We consider all referrals for welfare checks on a daily basis and will prioritise these even if the referral does not merit an immediate ongoing involvement by the Inclusion Team. In these cases, we will give schools clear advice and guidance as to what school-based measures can be put in place.

Bespoke email updates are sent at intervals to each school focussing on their non-returners and those with under 30% attendance in the preceding 10 days. These emails remind the school that, where absences are unauthorised, there are sighting obligations and that Inclusion Team referrals are encouraged. Where the absences are authorised, the schools are reminded of the need for ongoing reviews as per the Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) Protocol and to ensure that any off-site attendances are also logged by way of mirroring reports.

Monthly reporting on both attendance and exclusions to the local authority's (LA's) Directorate Management Team meeting has been in place since September 2021, with scrutiny of data by the Director for Learning and Skills and Heads of Service. Improvements have also been made to the reporting on ONE to ensure the duty under the Public Sector Equality Act is fully adhered to.

## April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team

Termly data on ranges of attenders and non-attenders : under 80%, under 30% and zero% is part of the data shared to Consortium improvement partners in the Wellbeing Improvement Matrix (WIM) and associated board meeting to discuss the data. Positive links to and relationships with Early Help (Families First), Social Services, Youth Services (NEET, Inspire, Youth Workers and wellbeing teams) and with the Youth Offending Service (YOS) have been established.

Extensive training has been organised over the last two years for all officers within the Inclusion Team covering a range of relevant areas to ensure a holistic and learner-focused approach to non-attendance and engagement. Training sessions have included mental health first aid, the NHS resilience programme of courses for anxious and phobic learners and trauma-focused issues. Increased focus on public sector equality duty –whole team training on Trans support via Mermaids and No Outsiders – LGBTQ+ training cascade.

Training and support for Inclusion Officers (IOs) has been provided following an internal restructure to create a year-round rather than term-time only support service. Inclusion Officers (IOs) are now employed on 52-week contracts and work in roles where there is a focus on supporting the journey of a learner with their education not just their attendance. The IOs have been trained to support learners in multi-agency meetings around a range of issues such as establishing PSPs, challenging exclusions, supporting EHE and CME aspects.

The IOs are also trained in using ‘Tis Motional’ and ‘Selfie’ - the wellbeing tools used to profile learner wellbeing and to encourage the use of these at an early stage with learners and schools to prevent deterioration of attendance and to encourage learner-voice and participation. They have also taken part in Mental health first Aid training and Resilience Project training to enable them to be better equipped to deal with the reasons for non-attendance arising from covid lock downs. In addition to the AWE Team being established and increased in capacity from its initial 2 LSAs (now 3 LSAs and 3 part-time teachers), we have procured alternative providers to hold wellbeing carousel days for targeted year groups where anxiety has been exacerbated by covid or where transition to secondary has been impacted by covid. Years 4 to 6 and 7 to 8 have been supported by these carousel days.

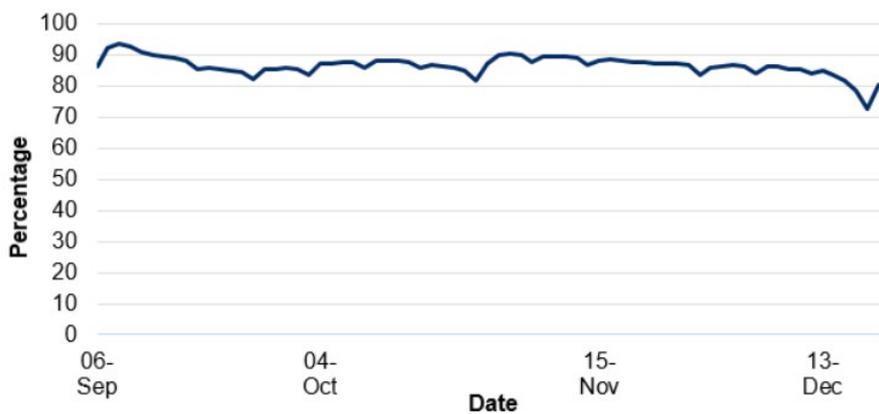
AREA	AUTUMN TERM DATA
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>	
Overall attendance rate (%)	90.4
Approved absence rate (%)	7.8
Unapproved absence rate (%)	1.7
<b>SECONDARY SCHOOLS</b>	
Overall attendance rate (%)	86.5
Approved absence rate (%)	8.7
Unapproved absence rate (%)	4.9
<b>ALL SCHOOLS</b>	
Overall attendance rate (%)	89.7
Approved absence rate (%)	7.8
Unapproved absence rate (%)	2.6
<b>SPECIAL SCHOOLS</b>	
Overall attendance rate (%)	80.2
Approved absence rate (%)	17.6
Unapproved absence rate (%)	2.2

# April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team

EHE	
Primary - Number of deregistrations	15.0
Secondary - Number of deregistrations	21.0
Overall - Number of deregistrations	36.0
All active EHE YR - Y11 on 31/12/21	135.0

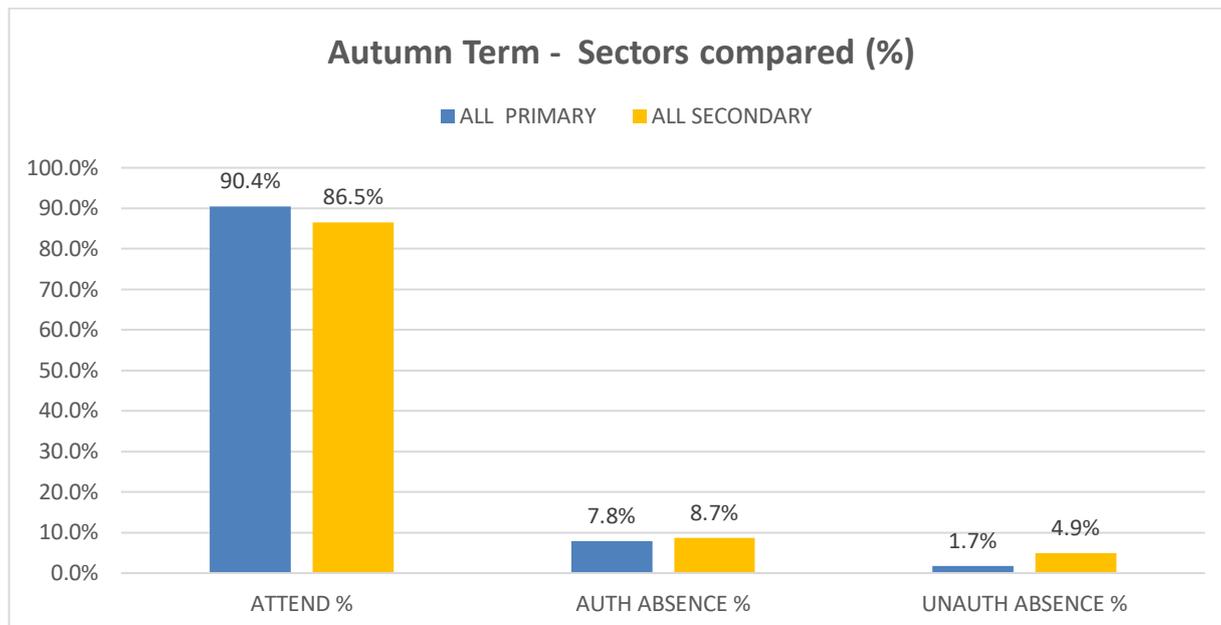
## Wales Overall

Attendance of pupils by day, 6 September 2021 onwards



Source: Schools in Wales

## VOG Autumn Term



# April 2021 to January 2022 Vale of Glamorgan – Inclusion Team

## BH Case study

**Year 6 2019/2020** attendance **90.1%**

Attended primary school in Llantwit. Applied for Llantwit High School, not accepted as residential address was now in Bridgend. Older sibling attending Llantwit High school and younger siblings attending primary school in Llantwit. Parental split led to mum moving to Penarth, applied, and accepted at St Cyres. BH missed out on any transition due to lockdown in March 2020.

**Feb 2021** St Cyres submitted a welfare request for BH as not attending - attendance **15.6%**.

**April 2021** St Cyres submitted an inclusion referral for BH – attendance **14.4%** open to inclusion team Initial meeting with BH identified – anxiety – Covid, friendship groups, parental split, dislike for PE. BH made it clear she wanted to attend Llantwit school to be with friends.

**May 2021** PSP meeting, BH refused to attend. Above anxieties discussed, parents considering re applying for Llantwit. BH refusing to engage in online work and attending school. PSP agreed 2.5hrs a day with support. I2A, youth service and Awe referral made.

**June 2021** parents considering EHE. Implications and concerns discussed.

**July 2021** BH and mother met with IO and AWE. End of year attendance **9.21%**

**September 2021** BH has now permanently moved in with father in Bridgend. Application for Llantwit school made. BH refuses to attend ST Cyres on a PSP but agrees to attend Carousel at Inspired learners on a Tuesday. Attendance sept to oct 21 – **0%**

**October 2021** accepted at Llantwit high school. Continues to attend Carousel on a Tuesday as agreed with school

**December 2021** IO met with BH at Carousel Christmas fair. BH settled and happy in school, enjoyed her sessions at Carousel.  
Carousel attendance **100%** School Attendance **76%**

## **Support provided to school governors on attendance related matters:**

The Inclusion Team supports the governor training programme for the Vale of Glamorgan and has delivered sessions to VOG governors on the evening programme of training in 4 key areas that sit within the Inclusion Team remit and which support school attendance and engagement.

Governor training delivered in the past 12 months:

- 1 Elective Home Education (EHE) and Children Missing Education (CME),
- 2 Inclusion/ exclusion,
- 3 Pastoral Support Plans (PSPs) and reduced timetables
- 4 Restraints and restrictive practices.

The Inclusion Team also recently delivered an awareness / training session to the Chairs of Governors in VOG advising them of the Inclusion remit, the training offer and also all the ways the LA and schools can and should be supporting attendance within the current WG guidelines.

**CYPE(6)-05-22 - Paper to note 5**  
**Children, Young People and Education Committee**  
**Request for information on Pupil attendance & training for school governors**  
**Response from: Vale of Glamorgan Council**



Agenda Item:

Meeting of:	<b>Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 14 October 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Governor Training Report for the 2020/21 Academic Year
Purpose of Report:	To report on governor training for the 2020/21 Academic Year
Report Owner:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Responsible Officer:	John Sparks, Head of Governor Support
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Consultation is not applicable
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for noting by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This report provides commentary and a statistical summary of the attendance and evaluations received for online governor training courses held during the 2020/21 academic year.</li> <li>• Despite Covid 19 and its restrictions, training opportunities for Vale governors were not adversely affected during the 2020/21 academic year. A record number of governors attended a record number of training sessions/courses. A summary of attendance over the last 6 years is provided in the report.</li> <li>• 51 virtual courses/sessions were held, and 682 Vale governors attended last academic year. This is an increase of an additional 12 courses and 117 more Vale governors trained during an academic year than the previous record.</li> <li>• A survey has been circulated to all Vale governors seeking their views on future governor training provision and suggestions for future courses. This feedback will inform governor training provision for the 2021/22 academic year.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

1. That Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee consider the report.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. This report was previously requested by the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) and is now an annual item. It will be presented annually to report on governor training for the preceding academic year.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 There are approximately 850 governors managing 55 schools within the Vale of Glamorgan. Governors play a key role in school improvement. Welsh Government has made legislation that introduced mandatory training for school governors for certain elements from September 2013. The mandatory elements cover induction, data, chair and clerk training and as such are a major focus of our governor training programme.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 Due to Covid 19 restrictions it was not possible to hold any physical governor training sessions during the 2020/21 academic year. However, from the second half of the 2020 Autumn Term through to the end of the 2021 Summer Term, 51 virtual courses/sessions were held and in total 682 Vale governors attended. That is 12 more courses than have ever been held previously and 117 more Vale governors trained during an academic year than the previous record, when 565 governors attended 39 courses during the 2017/18 academic year.
- 2.2 As well as the 51 courses/sessions provided there were also a number of drop-in sessions held throughout the year by the Central South Consortium (CSC) that attracted high numbers of governors. Unfortunately, although the numbers of attendees for these sessions were recorded, the names and local authorities these governors were from were not recorded so that information is not included within this report.
- 2.3 Although a record number of Vale governors attended training sessions during the 2020/21 academic year the completion of evaluation forms was significantly down on previous years at 49.5%. This is a pattern reflected with other virtual training courses run by both CSC (average 50%) and other local authorities across the region and despite the fact that the Vale virtual evaluation form at Appendix A is only a few questions and one page long. Although Appendix A appears as 2 pages that is due to the print layout, it is only 1 page online.

- 2.4** Another factor this year in the reduced number of evaluations received is that CSC significantly changed their evaluation form, which had previously mirrored the Vale’s evaluation form. Therefore, it is not possible to record responses from CSC and Vale run courses in a single analysis as has happened in previous years. The Vale’s evaluation form asks 3 questions whereas the revised CSC evaluation form asks 7 questions, none of which are compatible. We also did not circulate evaluation forms for the 2 Education Update & Briefing Sessions held in December 2020 and June 2021 where a total of 93 governors attended.
- 2.5** In terms of consistency with this report in previous years, 140 evaluations were received from 283 governors attending 16 Vale run courses during the 2020/21 academic year and a summary table of the data from these evaluations is included below. Whilst these percentages are lower than in previous years, they all still exceed 90% of governors saying the courses were either good or very good. The actual number of attendees per course is provided at Appendix B.

Question	% of good or very good evaluations
How well did the course meet its stated aims and objectives?	92.76
How useful was the course content to your needs?	90.45
How effective were the course providers?	93.20

- 2.6** In conclusion, despite Covid 19 and its restrictions, training opportunities for Vale governors were not adversely affected and in fact a record number of governors attended a record number of training sessions/courses during the 2020/21 academic year as previously referenced at paragraph 2.1.
- 2.7** Going forward, governor training opportunities will continue to be held virtually during at least the Autumn Term 2021 due to the current uncertainty and it will be reviewed accordingly. A survey has been circulated to all Vale governors seeking their views on future governor training provision, virtual, physical or a combination of both, preferred times (if virtual) and suggestions for future courses. This feedback will inform governor training provision for the 2021/22 academic year.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Courses held	Governors attended	Evaluations received
2014/15	97.20%	94.30%	95.80%	29	457	359 (78.6%)
2015/16	97.60%	96.30%	97.30%	31	490	437 (89.2%)
2016/17	98.50%	97.30%	98.60%	30	437	397 (90.8%)
2017/18	98.10%	97.60%	97.80%	39	565	484 (85.7%)
2018/19	96.30%	95.80%	97.80%	32	535	465 (86.9%)
2019/20	98.60%	96.90%	98.80%	15	289	251 (86.9%)
2020/21	92.76%	90.45%	91.49%	51	682	*140 (49.5%)

\*This figure relates to 140 evaluations received from 283 governors attending 16 Vale courses which is considerably lower than in previous years but is attributable to far less governors completing virtual evaluations as explained at paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (“the 2015 Act”) requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 3.2** The Council has committed as part of the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 to achieving a vision of ‘Working Together for a Brighter Future’. This plan is reflective of the Welsh Government’s Well-being of Future Generations Act and is comprised of four Well-being objectives to deliver this vision:
- Objective 1 - To work with and for our communities
  - Objective 2 - To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
  - Objective 3 - To support people at home and in their community
  - Objective 4 - To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment
- 3.3** Governor training is an essential component of the school improvement agenda and it is a statutory requirement that all Local Authorities provide it. It enables governors to fulfil their roles effectively by challenging schools to improve and contributes to the Council's Wellbeing Objective 2: To support learning, employment and sustainable growth by raising overall standards of achievement.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** All training was delivered by Council or Consortium employees online so there were no additional costs for delivery.

### **Employment**

- 4.2** None.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.3** All Local Authorities must provide training for governors in accordance with The Education Measure (Wales) 2011 to enable them to fulfil their roles. Mandatory elements for induction, data, chair and clerk training are required by The Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) Regulations 2013.
- 4.4** Governor training opportunities within the medium of Welsh will continue to be available during the 2021/22 academic year.

## **5. Background Papers**

The Education Measure (Wales) 2011.

The Government of Maintained Schools (Training Requirements for Governors) (Wales) Regulations 2013.