

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



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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Peter Black AM  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay

06 November 2014

Dear Peter,

In response to the supplementary question you raised in Plenary on 21 October on school attendance the First Minister asked me to provide clarification on a number of policies.

Good school attendance is key to helping children have the best possible start in life, and lay the basis for them to fully maximise their potential. This is not just in terms of academic achievement, and future employability, but also for their long term health prospects. There is clear evidence that links attendance, educational achievement, employability and better long term health outcomes.

If a child is not in school that child cannot learn. We want to understand why a child is not in school and provide the appropriate support to get children back to school when they are fit and well.

The four education consortia received a total of £800,000 over two years to develop effective practices to secure sustainable improvements in school attendance. Nearly 60% of absenteeism from secondary schools in 13/14 was due to illness. The Central South Consortium 'managing sickness absence from school' guidance does not automatically recommend that your child should be absent from school due to a number of specific illnesses, and this advice needs to be balanced with needs of the individual child. To help parents decide on the best course of action, the guidance also sets out a number of questions parents might to consider prior to making a decision on whether to send their child to school or not. All activities undertaken using the consortia attendances grant will be evaluated to establish the effectiveness of the actions.

The Welsh Government's guidance document 'Access to Education and Support for Children and Young People with Medical Needs' provides advice to local authorities (LAs) and schools. It emphasises the need for continuity in education and the impact medical conditions can have upon education, health and well-being. All schools should have a written policy for supporting the education of children and young people with medical needs. This guidance has been circulated to all LAs and schools in Wales.

The National Model clarifies and strengthens regional consortia working. It seeks to ensure a more consistent approach across the four consortia regions and it clarifies the way local authorities' commission the services of regional education consortia to achieve whole school improvement. There is no change in the statutory responsibilities. Local authorities will retain their statutory accountability for school performance together with the responsibility for the exercise of statutory powers of intervention and the organisation of schools. Through implementing the National Model, individual local authorities will stop providing school improvement services, instead, those services will be provided through consortia established and run by them. As the commissioning body, Local Authorities must hold Consortia to account for the delivery of their regional school improvement services. The work of the consortia is overseen by a joint committee of the constituent local authorities, who is effectively the decision making body. The joint committee is supported by an advisory board whose role is to oversee, support and challenge the work of the regional consortia and provide progress updates and advice to the joint committee.

Concerns about a particular issue within a consortium could be addressed to either the chair of the consortium joint committee, the consortium Managing Director or to the Director of Education of the constituent local authority.

Yours sincerely



**Huw Lewis AC / AM**

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