

## Monmouthshire Local Authority Attendance Report

Academic Year 2024-25

Focus: Pupil Attendance in Schools

Date of Report: 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026

### 1. Support and Challenge for Schools

- 1.1 The local authority (LA) places a strong emphasis on regular school attendance, positive behaviour and wellbeing. Attendance is a priority, as reflected in the Community and Corporate Plan 'Learning Place'. This means that the LA makes explicit links with a range of issues that can impact upon attendance such as poverty, social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, and additional learning needs (ALN), and ensures that promoting positive attendance is everyone's responsibility. The LA reinforces the importance of good attendance with parents/carers regularly through communications from the Strategic Director.
- 1.2 The LA Education Welfare Service adopts a holistic approach to improve and secure good levels of attendance and wellbeing. Officers work in partnership with school-based staff to ensure pupils and their families receive beneficial and timely support. Education Welfare Officers (EWO) and Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) work within clusters of schools. This means they know the schools well, and the support they provide to families with children in different phases is consistent and cohesive. The LA makes use of punitive measures and a prosecution process where necessary, although this is a last resort and only undertaken when all other avenues have been exhausted.
- 1.3 The LA's Attendance and Engagement Policy provides a graduated approach for schools and the PRS to support improvements in attendance, through the consistent application of effective school-based strategies, well-established systems and processes such as:
  - targeted support for pupils and their families from Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) and Family Liaison Officers (FLOs)
  - bespoke support for pupils to re-integrate into school after a period of absence
  - targeted interventions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism, particularly for vulnerable pupils
  - support for pupils and families who elect for an education at home
  - a robust approach to managing pupils missing from education
  - advice and guidance including an Attendance Toolkit and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) guidance
  - close collaboration with key services such as inclusion, social services, health and the police

- 1.4 The Education Welfare Service (EWS) regularly analyses a wide range of attendance data to track and monitor levels of attendance for schools and groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals (FSM), ALN, and those who are persistently absent. This enables them to identify trends across the LA and evaluate the impact of their support on school attendance over time. This work forms the basis of consultation meetings and supports schools to reflect appropriately on their own data so that they evaluate the impact of their work to plan and implement long-term strategies to improve pupils' attendance.
- 1.5 EWS hold consultations with secondary schools and the PRS fortnightly, and primary schools half-termly. These meetings provide worthwhile opportunities for EWOs to challenge individual schools on the impact of their strategies to improve pupil and whole school attendance and understand the reasons behind cases of school absence. These discussions also include a review of individual cases to ensure interventions are appropriate, check attendance coding, carry out official register checks. This identifies pupils where non-attendance is a concern and a potential consideration for intervention and enables EWOs to provide appropriate advice, guidance and undertake planned interventions in a timely manner.
- 1.6 It is the expectation that nearly all pupils should attend school. However, when this is not possible and schools have exhausted all avenues, referrals for EWS support and intervention are considered by a panel. This approach ensures that there is a coordinated and consistent approach to referral, recording and reporting processes and a clear process for closing cases. The EWS undertakes relevant assessments in partnership with learners, parents/carers, school staff and other relevant parties, concerning low attendance at school or for those pupils receiving EOTAS provision.
- 1.7 Extensive multi-agency work has enhanced the understanding of, and support offered, around EBSA by professionals, including school staff, working with pupils and their families. This focuses on early identification and preventative support so that timely intervention occurs to promote positive outcomes and improve attendance, to prevent entrenched patterns of EBSA and persistent absenteeism. The LA uses a multi-agency Inclusion Panel and the Fair Access Panel to seek clarification on the most appropriate next steps or provision for particular groups of learners where low attendance or learner engagement are barriers to learning.
- 1.8 The LA fosters positive relationships through a range of approaches of which attendance is a key feature. FLOs promote good relationships within schools and the community and link closely with wider Community Focused Schools (CFS) work. They work with pupils, families, schools and community agencies such as food banks, and ensuring families are accessing services they may need. This collaborative working supports better engagement with schools, improves communication and helps to overcome barriers to attendance. CFS colleagues also use school spaces to develop and promote school community

engagement for families through the provision of school uniform support and community gardens.

- 1.9 The EWS work collaboratively with the School Health Nurse Team and CAMHS InReach to ensure, wherever possible, there are appropriate strategies in place to support pupils and families overcome their barriers to engagement with school.
- 1.10 The Rights, Respects and Equality (RRE) multi-agency group promotes positive relationships and works to reduce bullying, including work around the anti-racism agenda acknowledging the potential impact of these issues on the SEMH needs of learners and their attendance.
- 1.11 The Wellbeing in Schools Partnership Group brings together school representatives with a range of services, both internally and externally, to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of learners. Focussing on key priorities identified through consultation with group representatives and responding to the School Health Research Network (SHRN) pupil surveys.
- 1.12 The ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) programme is a well-established educational psychology-led evidence-based intervention designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils within their own resources. During 2024-25, all schools had at least one active ELSA, with approximately 70 active ELSAs working in our schools.
- 1.13 Following the pandemic, the LA has had an ongoing focus on trauma informed and relational practice, funding and providing on-going supervision for many school staff and professionals across the county, including all members of the EWS. Recently this has led to the development of a local, sustainable programme of Trauma Informed Practice Skills and Strategies (TIPSS). This supports staff working closely with children impacted by trauma to develop skills, strategies and confidence to intervene and support the development of positive relationships which promote positive engagement and attendance.

## **2. Attendance Data**

- 2.1 The Education Welfare Service (EWS) regularly analyses a wide range of attendance data to track and monitor levels of attendance for schools and groups of pupils, including those eligible for free school meals Half-termly attendance data reports are collated and shared with all headteachers.
- 2.2 The EWOs and Vulnerable Learner Lead (VLL) share data regularly to ensure that attendance and exclusions are correctly coded. LA officers ensure that ALN Bespoke packages are correctly monitored and reviewed, including levels of attendance where appropriate. Outcomes from this work are shared with relevant parties and used to inform decisions about support and intervention.
- 2.3 Welsh Government publish the attendance of pupils in maintained schools, at a local authority levels every two weeks. Since 2022-23, following a pause due

the pandemic, Welsh Government release annual All Wales Core Data sets for attendance in all schools.

### **3. Persistent Absence**

- 3.1 The definition of persistent absence was amended in November 2023 from pupils with attendance below 20% to pupils with attendance below 10%. As a result, levels of persistent absence across Wales increased initially. While persistent absence remains higher, the level of persistent absence in Monmouthshire is reducing appropriately.
- 3.2 This area is a priority for EWS and all schools. Support for persistently absent pupils follows our tiered approach to securing improvements in attendance and can escalate to intensive levels of support including meetings with parents, referrals to other services, and pastoral support. If the EWS exhaust all avenues and attendance has not improved, the LA may consider punitive measures.

### **4. Attendance Performance 2024-25 Academic Year**

- 4.1 Overall attendance in Monmouthshire between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 – July 2025 is 92.2%, placing Monmouthshire first in Wales.
- 4.2 In the Secondary Schools Core All Wales Core Data Sets for 2024-25, Monmouthshire's attendance is 0.4 pp above the national average. However, at -12.2pp, the gap between e-fsm pupils and non-fsm pupils is greater than the national average of -9.9pp. Persistence absence rates in Monmouthshire secondary schools are reducing appropriately and are 5.1pp below the national average.
- 4.3 In the Primary Schools Attendance Core Data Set for 2024-25, Monmouthshire's primary school attendance is 93.9%, 1.2pp above the national average. The gap in attendance between e-fsm pupils and non-fsm pupils has increased to -5.5pp however, this is 0.2pp below the national average. The level of persistent absence is improving and in Monmouthshire is 10.2pp lower than the national average.

### **5. Attendance Performance over time**

- 5.1 The table below compares attendance in Monmouthshire with the Wales average between 2018-19, pre-pandemic, and reporting years from 2022-23 until 2024-25. During this period overall attendance in Monmouthshire in both primary and secondary phases have remained above the Wales average.

Phase	Data	2018-19	2019-20	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Primary	Monmouthshire	95.4%	No data	92.9%	93.6%	93.9%
	Wales	94.7%	No data	91.5%	92.2%	92.7%
Secondary	Monmouthshire	95.1%	No data	88.1%	88.2%	89.5%
	Wales	93.8%	No data	87.5%	88.0%	89.1%

## 6. Intensive Support for Schools

- 6.1 Regular data monitoring meetings with the Strategic Director provide beneficial opportunities to critically review trends and concerns around attendance and exclusions at a strategic level. Where needed, this is followed up in professional discussions, often resulting in targeted support and/or further challenge to the school or the PRS. In a few cases, this can lead to more detailed scrutiny and challenge through a Team Around the School (TAS) approach between the school, the LA and the school improvement service.

## 7. Vulnerable learners

- 7.1 The EWS engagement in developmental work with Welsh Government to strengthen processes for Children Missing Education (CME) and regular attendance at the All-Wales CME Network meetings, ensure that the LA is well informed to monitor and support this group of vulnerable pupils effectively. The CME policy processes are robust, followed up and investigated by the EWS team in a timely manner from the point of notification. Regular updates are communicated to schools, relevant professionals, and other LAs where a pupil may have moved out of the area. There are good recording systems and action monitoring in place to share pupil information through the secure transfer system if they are not found or a destination is unknown.
- 7.2 Children who may have missed education (CME) are supported to return to school as soon as possible. The LA provides support to learners who have been EHE for a period and wish to return to a mainstream school by facilitating discussions with schools. Where the LA with responsibility is not Monmouthshire; these cases are discussed at Fair Access Panel (FAP).
- 7.3 The number of pupils who are Electively Home Educated has increased significantly since the pandemic. The EWS has a dedicated EHE Officer to ensure that parents are aware of their responsibilities if their child is EHE and carry out initial and annual visits to review provision and well-being. In addition, the LA provides support to EHE families, signposting them to suitable educational experiences, organising EHE events and supporting pupils to sit external examinations where appropriate.

## 8. Estyn Inspections

- 8.1 Estyn inspected the following five primary and two secondary schools between September 2024 -July 2025. Ysgol Y Fenni, Archbishop Rowan Williams

Church in Wales Primary, Magor Church in Wales Primary, Shirenewton Primary and Rogiet Primary, Caldicot School and Chepstow School.

There were no recommendations to improve attendance in primary schools and strengths noted included robust and effective systems and processes, with strong and improving rates of attendance.

8.3

In Chepstow School, Estyn recognised that robustness of processes and attendance tracking. While attendance at the time of the inspection remained below pre-pandemic levels, attendance improved at a faster rate than nationally, including for e-fsm pupils, the number of pupils persistently absence reduced.

8.4

Although Estyn recognised improvement in attendance levels in Caldicot School, the rates did not improve well enough in 2023-24 and were below similar schools across Wales. Consequently, Estyn left the school with a recommendation to improve attendance.

## **9. Resource Implications**

9.1 The increase in staffing and the appointment of FLOs during 2024-25 is having a positive impact on attendance, particularly in primary schools. However, nearly half of the EWS budget comprises of grant funding which is an on-going risk to the service in terms of recruitment, retention and support for pupils, families and schools.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 The report provides members with information on the attendance in Monmouthshire schools for the academic year 2024-25. Overall, the LA is performing above the national average in most measures and in the primary phase, attendance is returning to pre-pandemic levels. However, overall attendance in secondary schools, particularly e-fsm attendance, is not improving rapidly enough.