



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18th OCTOBER 2018

**PRE SCRUTINY - SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY FOR 2018 – 2021
“MISS SCHOOL, MISS OUT”**

JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION (COUNCILLOR JOY ROSSER)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the School Attendance strategy 2018- 2021 following Pre-scrutiny by the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 26th September, 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the comments and observations of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee attached as Appendix A of this report.
- 2.2 Subject to any further comment by Cabinet Members, endorse the recommendations outlined within the School Attendance Strategy For 2018 – 2021 “Miss School, Miss Out” as attached as Appendix B of the report (and for ease of reference as listed below):
1. To approve implementation of the draft School Attendance Strategy for 2018-2021.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The need for Members to be aware of the comments and observations of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee prior to their consideration of the strategy as attached as Appendix B.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee on the [18th July](#) the Committee agreed to pre-scrutinise the report of the Director, Education in respect of the School Attendance strategy prior to Cabinet’s consideration.

4.2 The Scrutiny Committee met on the 26th September to pre-scrutinise the strategy and the draft minute is attached as Appendix A.

5. PRE-SCRUTINY OF THE STRATEGY

5.1 At the meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Members discussed the strategy and provided comments in respect of:

- Funding provision in respect of the 3rd Year of the strategy
- Recognising the achievements of those students facing barriers to attendance
- Priority 5 - Truancy Watch and Truancy Free Zones - Concerns in respect of Truancy Free Zones
- Engagement with School Governors and pupils – to be taken forward.

5.2 The Draft strategy has been amended to incorporate the comments of the Committee and is attached as Appendix B.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 The report contained within appendix B has been presented to scrutiny for pre scrutiny before consideration by Cabinet.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 Any financial implications are outlined within Appendix B of the report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 Non applicable – the report is identifying the scrutiny arrangements that have taken place.

10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES

10.1 Making Best Use of Our Budget – Pre scrutiny can improve cost effectiveness.

11 CONCLUSION

11.1 It is recognised that scrutiny is a vital component of good governance and improves Councils' decision making, service provision and cost effectiveness.

11.2 The undertaking of pre-scrutiny by the Children & Young People Committee in this area will strength accountability and assist Cabinet Members in taking any future decisions on these matters.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer

Emma Wilkins – 01443 424110

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18TH OCTOBER, 2018

JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER COUNCILLOR J ROSSER.

Item: **PRE SCRUTINY**

Background Papers

Children & Young People – [26th September, 2018](#).

Officer to contact:

Emma Wilkins – 01443 424062

23. PROPOSED SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY FOR 2018- 2021

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing presented the report to Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee explaining that the purpose of the report is to provide Members with the full Draft School Attendance Strategy 2018 - 2021, including the action plan aimed at raising awareness of good school attendance and improving the current rates across Rhondda, Cynon and Taf.

Members were informed of the attendance figures for years 2015/16 and 2017/18 which evidence the need for a revision of the School Attendance Strategy to address the key issues contributing to the reduced attendance rates.

It was explained to the Committee that the Strategy will further strengthen the focus on intervention, support and awareness raising of the wider school population either prior to referral or in addition to the support being provided to the pupils open to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

Members were presented with the six key priorities of the school attendance strategy which are:

- Improve pupil, parent, public and school awareness of school attendance issues by developing a whole authority approach to promoting and improving attendance;
- Review, evaluate and further develop the use of data, its analysis and the reporting mechanisms to inform service improvements both at local authority and school level;
- To further develop a robust and sustainable challenge and support system for improving school attendance, linking with other key priorities that impact on and are impacted by absenteeism;
- To develop an efficient and self-sustainable mechanism for sharing good practice and information on a timely basis that can be accessed independently by schools at any time;
- To review, evaluate and re-launch key initiatives and interventions to support good attendance and tackle absenteeism;
- Further develop partnership working to ensure the key objective of improving school attendance is embedded across internal and external agencies.

The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing guided Members through the Key Points and provided them with the progress that has been made against the action plan to date. After concluding her report the Head of Attendance and Wellbeing took questions from Members.

A Member asked Officers for clarification in respect of the different attendance data in the report that has been brought to this Committee and the data that had

been provided to the Finance and Performance on the 24th September 2018. Officers explained that they would look into the discrepancy and get back to Members with the correct information.

Members scrutinised the report in great detail and put forward many questions and observations. Members raised concerns in respect of in respect of priority 5 of the Attendance Strategy with regards to Truancy Watch and Truancy Free Zones.

A Member wanted clarity on how the Truancy Watch would work, it was explained this would be set up with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service in conjunction with the local PCSOs for regular patrols following a registration period in the local towns.

In respect of the Truancy Free Zone Members had a number of concerns, it was felt that this initiative needed to be looked at in more detail as it was felt that Local Authority settings (e.g. libraries) and local businesses could be considered as safe areas for pupils and by putting the label of Truancy Free Zone could push the pupils out of safe zones. It was felt that as a service we need to address the reason why they are not in school. Officers explained that the initiative isn't to push the pupils out of safe areas but to try and understand why and to support them back in to education.

In respect of the PCSO involvement a number of Members felt that the Officers are stretched to capacity and this could add more pressure on the service. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing explained that great work has been done with the South Wales Police and the British Transport Police within their regional operations.

A Member of the Committee asked the officer a question in respect of how much involvement the school governors have had in preparation of the strategy as reading the report there doesn't seem to any information. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing explained that governor involvement would be considered where appropriate and will be included in the plan moving forward.

Members required information on how much involvement the schools and young people had when developing the initiatives. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing indicated that there has been involvement with schools and the feedback has been incorporated in the plan.

Members also put questions forward relating to the way schools code non-attendance in certain circumstances. For example, when adverse weather conditions were a factor, girls missing school due to their menstrual cycle, pupils suffering with chronic illness etc. It was queried how are these are factored in to datasets when recording absences. The Head of Attendance and Wellbeing

explained that coding for attendance is controlled by all Wales codes provided by Welsh Government.

A Member commented that attendance is important however felt that many parents take children out of school for various appointments at the end of the day and this could also be detrimental to the pupils' learning. It was felt the letter being sent out to parents should be strengthened to alter parents to the problem.

After further consideration of the report Members **RESOLVED** to:

- Acknowledge the information contained within the report
- Provide Members with the correct information regarding the difference in attendance data.
- To involve School Governors in future discussions
- To create a template policy
- That comments will be fed back into the final report for Cabinet.
- To look more in depth at the Truancy Watch and Truancy Free Zones initiatives.



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18th OCTOBER 2018

**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY FOR 2018 – 2021
“MISS SCHOOL, MISS OUT”**

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION (COUNCILLOR JOY
ROSSER)**

AUTHOR(s): JESSICA ALLEN, (01443 744298)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the full Draft School Attendance Strategy, 2018 – 2021, including the action plan that will have to be implemented to raise the awareness of good school attendance and improve the current rates across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note and comment on the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to explore in greater depth any matters contained in the report.
- 2.3 Approve implementation of the draft School Attendance Strategy for 2018-2021..

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 3.1 Since 2016, attendance rates in Rhondda Cynon Taf have started to decline. Local data indicates that primary attendance is likely to have dropped from 94.6% in 2015/16 to 94.2% in 2017/18, although this is yet to be verified. Secondary attendance has declined from 93.9% to 93.0% over the same period, evidencing the need for a revision of the School Attendance Strategy to address the key issues contributing to the reduced attendance rates.
- 3.2 Unauthorised absence has increased during this period, especially in secondary schools where it has risen from 1.8% to 2.3%. This has resulted in a greater number

of referrals from schools being received by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service in an attempt to tackle the absenteeism:

	Academic Year		
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of referrals received by AWS	1195	1663	1686

- 3.3 The Attendance and Wellbeing Service was restructured in April 2018 to account for the changes in attendance experienced in schools and the evolving needs of service users: See Appendix 1 for service structure. The cases being managed by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service only account for approximately 4% of all statutory pupils.
- 3.4 The new service is more focused on delivering a tailored package of support to the pupils and their families who are referred by the school, with a clear expectation on schools to manage their internal processes more effectively. The sharing of good practice, support and challenge meetings and regular registration compliance checks are all part of the support that has been offered to schools to improve their management of school attendance.
- 3.4 Therefore, the strategy will further strengthen the focus on intervention, support and awareness raising of the wider school population, either prior to referral or in addition to the support being provided to the pupils open to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

4. KEY PRIORITIES OF THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The strategy will focus on six key priorities, which if achieved effectively, should have a positive impact on school attendance across the County Borough:
- Improve pupil, parent, public and school awareness of school attendance issues by developing a whole authority approach to promoting and improving attendance;
 - Review, evaluate and further develop the use of data, its analysis and the reporting mechanisms to inform service improvements both at local authority and school level;
 - To further develop a robust and sustainable challenge and support system for improving school attendance, linking with other key priorities that impact on and are impacted by absenteeism;
 - To develop an efficient and self-sustainable mechanism for sharing good practice and information on a timely basis that can be accessed independently by schools at any time;
 - To review, evaluate and re-launch key initiatives and interventions to support good attendance and tackle absenteeism;
 - Further develop partnership working to ensure the key objective of improving school attendance is embedded across internal and external agencies.

The full draft strategic action plan can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

Priority 1: Improve pupil, parent, public and school awareness of school attendance issue by developing a whole authority approach to promoting and improving attendance

- 4.2 The overarching slogan of the strategy will be “Miss School, Miss Out”. Under this umbrella, the primary phase will be branded as Super Attender, whilst the secondary phase will link attendance to attainment, hence “Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow”.
- 4.3 The corporate website and social media accounts will be used as the main platforms for disseminating the messages of the campaign. They will contain imagery of the general messages noted in 4.2, but will also focus on some of the more prevalent ‘excuses’ for non-attendance that RCT will not condone. These include:
- Poor punctuality - not setting an alarm and missing the bus;
 - Missing school for inappropriate reasons – birthdays, shopping trips, holidays;
 - Booking non-urgent medical and dental appointments during the school day.
- 4.4 Schools can link their own social media accounts and websites to the corporate posts/tweets/pages to emphasise their involvement and backing of the local authority’s attendance strategy.
- 4.5 The ‘Super Attender’ brand will be refreshed and re-launched with a new challenge for the academic year: see [Appendix 3](#) for the letter to parents regarding the ‘Super Attender Challenge’. He will set the challenge at the beginning of the year and highlight the importance of good school attendance at all times. Rewards will be provided by the schools on a termly basis for the following achievements:
- 98% or above attendance in the term period;
 - the most improved attendance (identified by the school); and,
 - the individual who has overcome the most to attend (chosen by the school).
- 4.6 The Attendance and Wellbeing Service will be present at certain parents’ evenings for schools most in need of support, community events such as Christmas festivals, Teddy Bears’ Picnic promoting the benefits of good school attendance.

Priority 2: Review, evaluate and further develop the use of data, its analysis and the reporting mechanisms to inform service improvement both at local authority and school level

- 4.7 Current mid-year school attendance data reports will be realigned to the new Estyn framework, ensuring that schools receive the type of information they require to monitor their performance and identify areas for improvement. These will include vulnerable group data (non-identifiable) and trend data over the past three years split by half term.

- 4.8 Methods for the dissemination of the data will be reviewed with schools to ensure that the attendance lead receives the report and takes timely action to address any issues of concern.
- 4.9 Performance management data will be improved to monitor how both schools and the local authority are performing in relation to improving school attendance.

Priority 3: To further develop a robust and sustainable challenge and support system for improving school attendance, linking with other key priorities that impact on and are impacted by absenteeism

- 4.10 Based on the data collated in 4.7 and 4.9, a revised challenge and support framework has been established.
- 4.11 Registration compliance checks will be undertaken by Attendance Support/Engagement Officers in every school on a termly basis. Coding anomalies and basic practice concerns, will be raised with the head teacher/attendance lead during these sessions and an action plan devised to rectify/improve the identified areas.
- 4.12 Any significant coding and/or process concerns will be escalated to the team leader within the Attendance and Wellbeing Service who will facilitate a data response visit (DRV) with the head teacher/ attendance lead to undertake a more thorough audit of the processes and practices within the school, highlighting areas for improvement and good practice. A formal action plan with timescales for completion will be generated as part of the initial meeting. The review meeting will revisit the actions to determine if they have been met and their impact.
- 4.13 For schools causing significant concern, timely data-led senior meetings with head teachers will be held with the Director of Education, Head of Secondary School Achievement, Senior Challenge Advisor and the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. These schools will be those whose practices do not appear to be effective in improving and sustaining attendance levels. Support will be offered to self-evaluate the school's current position in comparison to 3 year trends, and develop a subsequent improvement plan to address these issues.
- 4.14 Effective innovation groups will be established and key schools invited to participate throughout the year. Each group will focus on a key area which the schools are struggling to achieve.

Priority 4: To develop an efficient and self-sustainable mechanism for sharing good practice and information on a timely basis that can be accessed independently by schools at any time

- 4.15 Resource packs have been compiled for use by all schools. They include a revised School Attendance Toolkit, template policies, self-evaluation framework and interventions to raise attendance within school prior to reaching the threshold for a referral to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. These prevention activities, if implemented fully, could reduce the number of pupils becoming entrenched absentees.

- 4.16 Good practice information will be shared in a timely and meaningful way that school can access independently at a time when they require it. The Source for Schools platform will be used to share the information and resources electronically. The information will be collated according to key strategy areas, such as, communication with pupils, communication with parents, data and evaluation, graduated response and interventions, school attendance policy, link with Governing Body, tackling persistent absenteeism, closing the gap, etc.
- 4.17 Wellbeing days for senior school staff will be offered to support school-to-school support for a sustainable improvement model. Identified good practice, both internal and external to Rhondda Cynon Taf, will be presented by the relevant school to others in the County Borough. Discussion sessions and workshops will be facilitated to improve schools' knowledge and expertise base, with key areas including behaviour support, alternative curriculum and exclusion management to support improved attendance and engagement in education.

Priority 5: To review, evaluate and re-launch key initiatives and interventions to support good attendance and tackle absenteeism

- 4.18 Whilst the number of pupils in public places during the school day has reduced in recent years, there is still a need to tackle truancy. Therefore, truancy patrols with South Wales Police and the British Transport Police will continue to run seasonal region-wide operations.
- 4.19 'Truancy Watch' will be introduced throughout 2018/19, where the Attendance and Wellbeing Service will link with local PCSOs for regular patrols following a registration period in the local towns.
- 4.20 The feasibility of 'Truancy-Free Zones' will be scoped. These will require 'buy-in' from local authority services such as libraries, theatres, leisure centres as well as local businesses to challenge school-aged children who are using these facilities during the school day.
- 4.21 In addition, a 'Child Missing Education (CME) Hotline' will be established for members of the public to raise the awareness of truancy hotspots for the Attendance and Wellbeing Service to patrol at key times.
- 4.22 School-based initiatives, delivered by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service, would be reviewed and effective initiatives introduced. The balance between case work and initiatives would need to be struck to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are not being overlooked at the expense of other initiatives. Types of initiatives include:
- Super Attender Challenge;
 - Secondary school target groups facilitated via restorative circles;
 - Attendance/punctuality panels;
 - Meet and Greet sessions;
 - Daily Absence Response Teams.

Priority 6: Further develop partnership working to ensure the key objective of improving school attendance is embedded across internal and external agencies

- 4.23 The strategy will require all service areas throughout the authority taking a shared responsibility for improving attendance at school. Working links with internal service will need to be established and/or further developed to ensure that school attendance is given consideration when planning support for children and their families.
- 4.24 A robust multi-agency monitoring procedure for persistent absentees (under 80%) will be established to ensure that schools are prioritising these learners for the appropriate support from Access and Inclusion Services to assist them to reengage in their education. Consultation meetings will be established to strengthen the school-based graduated response adopted for learners with persistently poor attendance. Strategic actions will be agreed as a result of these meetings and monitored on a termly basis to ensure effective implementation.
- 4.25 Learner voice initiatives to be established to gather information from cohorts of pupils on the challenges they face regarding school attendance.
- 4.26 Similar working links should be established with external partners that work with children, young people and their families to ensure that school attendance is a priority for them in their business plans and individual action/support plans for the pupils they work with.

5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 5.1 The strategy has been developed for implementation from the Autumn term 2018 to August 2021 (three academic years). However, the strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure each element has been implemented fully and the impact it is having on school attendance across RCT evaluated.
- 5.2 Regular updates on the progress against the action plan will be provided by the Head of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and reviewed by the Director of Education on a quarterly basis.
- 5.3 Annual updates will be presented to Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis for review and challenge.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This is an information report. No Equality Impact Assessment screening form is required.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 This is an information report, no consultation is required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 None at present.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

10.1 Good school attendance has a clear link to the Council's priority of Building a Strong Economy. Improved school attendance will have a positive impact on achievement and on this priority.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The six priority areas identified in section 4 of this report will provide the framework for all stakeholders to operate against to improve attendance.

11.2 All priorities must be achieved if the strategy is to be effective and achieve maximum results.

11.3 It should be noted that the improvement of school attendance does not rest with one service or organisation, and a multi-agency focus is necessary if all barriers to learning are to be removed for pupils.

11.4 Future service improvements within Education will need to consider school attendance and evidence how they will contribute to the improving attendance agenda.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Children and Young People

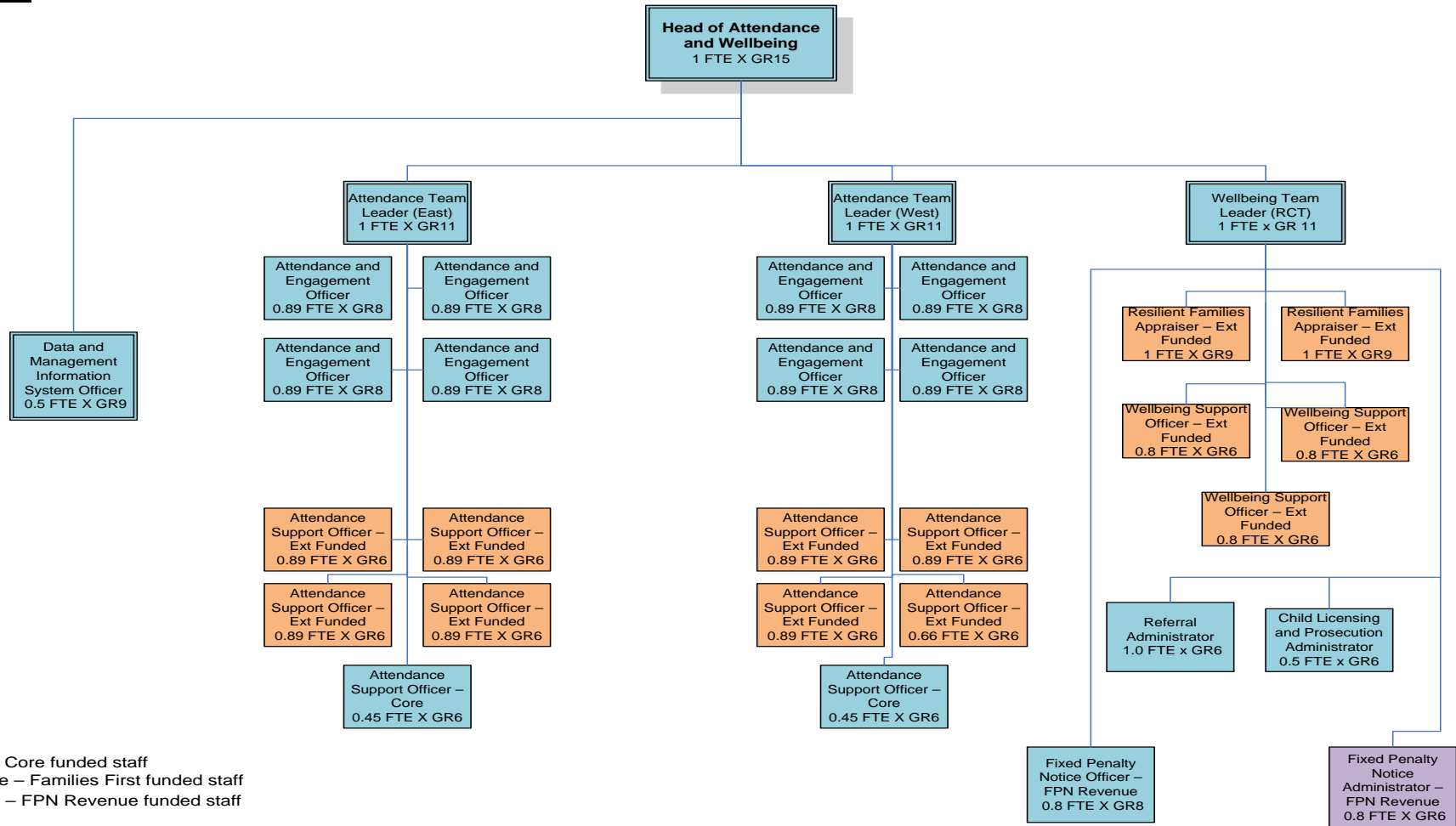
Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

Jess Allen

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

DRAFT IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ACTION PLAN 2018/19

What difference will this action plan make to service users / residents of RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attendance rates across both school phases; • Reduced attendance gap between FSM and nFSM pupils; • Improved educational outcomes for children and young people; • Improved wellbeing of pupils to improve engagement in learning. 			
How will we measure our progress	<i>Performance Indicators, where applicable, or other measures e.g. survey feedback.</i>		Data 2017/18 academic year	Target 2018/19 academic year
	1	% of pupil attendance in primary schools (annual)	tbc	tbc
	2	% of pupil attendance in secondary schools (annual)	93.0%	tbc
	3	% of pupil attendance at educated other than at school (EOTAS and PRU) provisions (local)	80.2%	>80.2%
	4	% gap between FSM and nFSM pupils – primary	tbc	tbc
	5	% gap between FSM and nFSM pupils – secondary	5.3%	<5.3%

What are we trying to achieve		PRIORITY 1. <u>Improve pupil, parent, public and school awareness of school attendance issues by developing a whole authority approach to promoting and improving school attendance</u>		
Critical Actions	Priority Actions	Key Milestones	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer
	1. Develop a marketing campaign to raise the profile of school attendance and the expectations of parents and pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm a overarching slogan for the campaign <u>“Miss School, Miss Out”</u> • Confirm primary phase brand as “Super Attender” • Confirm secondary phase brand as “Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow” to link school attendance with academic attainment/outcomes • Identify the target audiences for the campaign streams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pupils ○ Parents ○ Community ○ Schools • Ensure that the focus of the strategy to build the communications and activities to complement it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Highlight the main ‘excuses’ for absence that will not be authorised/accepted ○ Communicate the expectations of parents/carers in terms of good school attendance ○ Communicate the potential consequences of unauthorised absence ○ Raise awareness of the link between attendance and attainment 	<p>October 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>JA</p> <p>JA</p> <p>JA</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key themes of the marketing campaign that will be articulated through imagery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improving punctuality ○ Missing school for inappropriate reasons, including birthdays, shopping trips, family holidays ○ Booking medical appointments outside of the school day, non-urgent GP and dentist • Develop set posts for each of the theme areas, making them seasonal where appropriate • Post/tweet these posts on a pre-planned schedule in line with the key absence periods, with a URL to the webpage for further information on the subject • Create short animated videos conveying the above themes • Publish these short videos on the corporate Facebook and Twitter, as well as embedding them in the AWS pages of the corporate website • Re-develop the corporate Attendance and Wellbeing Service webpage ensuring its accessible (simple URL), containing all relevant information in a meaningful format, and that its enticing to the service user • Develop a refreshed 'Super Attender' brand of the above themes for primary aged pupils. Make the themes positive as opposed to punitive to encourage engagement • Secure Facebook advertising space, setting audience to the specific of the post being used, e.g. parents with young children, young people of secondary school age • Promote the expectations required of a parent and the possible consequences they could face if the expectations are not met on social media, websites and letters to parents 	October 2018	JA
				October 2018 Ongoing	JA/CD CD
				November 2018 Ongoing	CD CD
				November 2018	JA/CD
				November 2018	CD
				Ongoing	CD
				Ongoing	JA/CD

	2.	Roll out a public awareness campaign of the possible consequences for non-school attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is public awareness of RCT's use of Section 444 1(a) of the Education Act 1996, which allows courts to consider a custodial sentence to parents of repeat offenders by publicising on the website by publishing the consequences on the corporate website and via social media posts • Communicate the current use of fixed penalty notices for tackling absenteeism in RCT and re-publish a link to the Code of Conduct for Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence via press releases • Publish monthly Court outcomes for both open cases and FPNs in press releases • Co-ordinate the delivery of information raising awareness sessions and training for employers, schools and agencies working with children and young people, to ensure all are aware of regulations and time constraints for school aged children and young people 	November 2018	JA
				November 2018	JA
				Ongoing	JA
				March 2019 (Child Employment Week)	JA/EH
	3.	Raising the awareness of good school attendance with pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the 'unacceptable reasons' for absence throughout the school via school banners, posters. • Provide schools with resources to use with pupils to maintain the focus on good school attendance throughout the academic year • Reaffirm the reasons for pursuing good school attendance, i.e. link to attainment/outcomes and future prospects via target group sessions and on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Wicid) • Publicise the initiatives to support school attendance available at each school on school's website 	December 2018	JA
				December 2018	JA
				Ongoing	AWS Team
				Ongoing	Schools
	4.	Raising the awareness of good school attendance with school staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include school attendance briefing in school clerk training managed by the SIMS team • Inform schools of developments with school attendance in termly head teacher meetings • Encourage schools to clearly define each member of staff's role/responsibility in managing and promoting attendance 	March 2019	JA
				Ongoing	JA
				Ongoing	JA

	5.	Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate quantitative data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Website hits ○ Facebook insights ○ Increase in school attendance • Collate qualitative data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complaints received ○ Feedback from school ○ Learner voice events • Present findings to the Director of Education on a quarterly basis for service improvement decisions • Present findings to the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis for further improvement discussions. 	Quarterly	JA/CD
				Quarterly	JA
				Quarterly	JA
				Annually	JA

What are we trying to achieve		<u>PRIORITY 2. Review, evaluate and further develop the use of data, its analysis and the reporting mechanisms to inform service improvement both at local authority and school level</u>			
Critical Actions	Priority Actions		Key Milestones	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer
		1.	Re-align the mid-year school data reports with the new Estyn framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current half termly reports to ensure that the data captured is what schools require to undertake regular analysis of their pupil data by specific cohorts, e.g. split data by vulnerable groups and provide comparison to other schools in the county Work alongside the Data and Systems team to re-develop the format of the half termly reports to account for the vulnerable cohort data Restructure the reports to account for the new clusters of schools, including a standalone cluster for the four through schools 	October 2018 October 2018 October 2018
	2.	Review the current process of dissemination of data to schools and improve as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the correct recipient in each school is receiving the mid-year data reports Re-determine the frequency and time of dissemination of the reports to ensure the data is being received in a timely manner for schools to act upon it Review the central e-repository for the data reports, providing independently accessible data as and when schools require it 	October 2018 October 2018 October 2018	JA JA JA

	3.	Challenge and support the development of school-based provision for raising school attendance by ensuring effective use of data to deploy resources, inform changes and re-focus on priority objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the way school utilise the data packs provided to them via a task and finish group • Establish a training package for school clerks, school attendance officers and family engagement officers to utilise SIMS fully for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating school attendance • Establish a data training package for Strategic Attendance Leads and/or Heads of Year/Progress Leaders to improve the quality of the self-evaluation process in relation to attendance 	November 2018	JA
				October 2018	JA
				October 2018	JA

	4.	Strengthen the performance management of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and all schools via effective use of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint to the new Data, Compliance and Management Information System Officer (DCMISO) role within the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS) • Continue to monitor schools' code usage to ensure it is correct/appropriate and tackle it timely with schools, providing guidance as required (link with Priority 3) • Analyse and evaluate in-year school data, using comparisons with similar schools to challenge code usage and level, level of unauthorised/authorised absence, to determine schools in need of additional support, resources and challenge (link with Priority 3) • Use data stated above to inform appropriate deployment of AWS resources for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initiatives (Priority 5) ○ Additional in-school support (Priority 5) ○ Challenge and Support Meetings (Priority 3) • Develop reports to effectively manage the case work of the AWS officers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Timely progression of cases in line with service workflows ○ Monitor and challenge the outcomes of cases to ensure that emphasis is on achieving positive outcomes ○ Outcomes of school and family satisfaction surveys ○ Evaluate impact of support on attendance outcomes ○ Use service performance data to challenge current practice and inform service improvement 	<p>October 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>December 2018</p>	<p>JA/CE</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH/ KBJ</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH/ KBJ</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH/ KBJ</p> <p>JA/Data, Compliance and Management Information Systems Officer</p>
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What are we trying to achieve		PRIORITY 3. <u>To further develop a robust and sustainable challenge and support system for improving school attendance, linking with other key priorities that impact on and are impacted by absenteeism</u>			
Critical Actions	Priority Actions		Key Milestones	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer
		1.	Consolidate the support and challenge framework, for a clear escalation process for schools causing concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to undertake termly registration compliance checks in all RCT schools, led by the link officer to ensure effective code usage and challenge/amend coding anomalies. Continue to colour code schools (red or green) based on the outcomes of the checks to inform the data analysis process Escalate significant coding anomalies and internal practice concerns to the AWS team leaders for Data Response Visits (DRV) in the schools causing concern Undertake joint visits with Challenge Advisor if the poor outcome of the DRV is based on the leadership within the school Identify the schools causing the greatest concern and escalate for a Challenge and Support meeting with the Director of Education, Senior Challenge Advisors and Head of AWS. Schools identified for this intervention will be those whose current practices and processes are not effective at bringing about significant change. Schools will be supported to self-evaluate their current and historical position and develop an improvement plan to address the issues with the support of the LA if necessary Continue to provide regular information about schools causing concern to the Senior Challenge Advisors during the Case Conference process in order to support appropriate intervention 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Termly</p>
	2	Coordinate appropriate forums for school-based attendance staff to further develop their knowledge and skills to manage attendance more effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to deliver Secondary Wellbeing Days for Attendance Leads Introduce Primary Wellbeing Days for head teachers and/or leads for attendance to facilitate the sharing of good practice, discussion of data to place own school in context and consult on new initiative ideas Introduce small Innovation Groups (school improvement forum) to review key topic areas and facilitate inter-school working which should be self-sustaining 	<p>Termly</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>March 2019</p>	<p>BW/SC/JA</p> <p>JA/TB</p> <p>JA</p>

What are we trying to achieve		PRIORITY 4. <u>To develop an efficient and self-sustainable mechanism for sharing good practice and information on a timely basis that can be accessed independently by schools at any time.</u>		
Critical Actions	Priority Actions	Key Milestones	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer
	1. Revise the resources that are provided to schools to ensure they remain fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the School Attendance Toolkit to account for the changes within the AWS, national developments and requests for information received from school. Re-issue to schools bilingually • Provide schools with a template school attendance policy • Devise a model strategy framework for schools to adopt when attendance is a priority. To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-evaluation document ○ Template school attendance improvement plan ○ Communication plan 	<p>October 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>JA</p> <p>JA</p>
	2. Facilitate the sharing of good practice across schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the Source for Schools platform to use as the main e-repository for all good practice documents/information • Collate all current good practice by key strategy areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communication with parents ○ Data and evaluation ○ Coding requirements ○ Methods for collecting supporting evidence ○ Graduated response and interventions ○ School attendance policy ○ Links with Governing Body ○ Closing the gap ○ Persistent absenteeism interventions 	<p>October 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH/ KBJ</p>

What are we trying to achieve		PRIORITY 5. <u>To review, evaluate and re-launch key initiatives and interventions to support good attendance and tackle absenteeism</u>			
Critical Actions	Priority Actions		Key Milestones	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer
	1.	Enhance procedures for tackling outdoor truancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to undertake county-wide truancy patrols at key seasonal times with South Wales Police (SWP) and British Transport Police (BTP) 'Truancy Watch' - establish links with PCSOs for more regular local patrols following registration period (morning and after lunch) Introduce 'Truancy-Free Zones' throughout RCT, requiring the buy-in from other LA service areas such as libraries, leisure centres and local businesses to challenge school-aged children who are using these facilities and services during the school day. Children Missing Education (CME) hotline to be established for any member of the council or public to report pupils in the community during the school day 	Ongoing	AWS Team
				November 2018	JA
				March 2019	JA
				March 2019	JA

	2.	Review and re-launch school-based initiatives as 'added value' activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the capacity of the AWS undertake additional 'added value' activities in addition to case work • Re-launch the 'Super Attender Challenge' in all primary settings (mainstream and special schools) to set the challenge for pupils throughout the coming academic year • Establish secondary school target groups (including Ty Gwyn) for those above the threshold for referral to service but where attendance is starting to be identified as a concern. Facilitated by AWS staff via restorative circle time, but managed by the school (e.g. room availability, identifying appropriate pupils, receiving consent from parents/carers, ensuring they are present at the session, evaluating the impact on the participants' attendance) • Continue to offer Daily Absence Response Team activities in schools with high levels of unauthorised absence where parents/carers do not contact the school. These will be offered according to the data, where there is the greatest need • Continue to offer Meet and Greet activities in schools identified as having an issue with punctuality. Offer these are a set of activities to monitor any repeat offenders and escalate as appropriate. School to lead on these activities, ensuring that school staff are present alongside AWS officers, up-skilling school staff to continue to undertake these when AWS are not present. Support schools to follow up the discussion with parents with letters, meetings etc. to support parents to improve • AWS to attend school and community events to promote the need for good school attendance, reiterate parents' responsibilities for their child's attendance • Super Attender to attend community events to raise the profile of the brand outside of the school setting, e.g. Christmas festivals, Nos Galan, Teddy Bears' Picnic etc. 	<p>October 2018</p> <p>November 2018</p> <p>November 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH/ KBJ</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH</p> <p>JA/CJ/EH</p> <p>AWS Team</p> <p>AWS Team</p>
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What are we trying to achieve		PRIORITY 6. <u>Further develop partnership working to ensure the key objective of improving school attendance is embedded across internal and external agencies</u>			
Critical Actions	Priority Actions	Key Milestones	Delivery Date	Responsible Officer	
	1 Further develop working links with internal services to ensure a shared objective to improve school attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication via briefing notes and team meetings with other Education service areas and Children's and Adults' Service areas to raise the profile of good school attendance and ensure that the objective is included in all plans where appropriate • Encourage referrals of children and young people missing from education where these internal partners are made aware that they are not receiving an education or have moved out of county • Invite service areas to present to the AWS and head teachers so they are aware of the support opportunities these service can offer disengaged children and young people • Develop joint robust monitoring procedures with Access and Inclusion services for persistent absentees to ensure that schools are prioritising learners for the appropriate support to assist them to reengage in education • Introduce learner voice to gather information of the current cohort's challenges regarding school attendance • Ensure all future policies and procedures developed with the Education Directorate are underpinned by this strategy 	January 2018 Ongoing March 2019 October 2018 December 2018 March 2019	JA All AWS JA JA/HJ/KH/RK JA/SE/SP GD/JA	

	2	Establish and/or further develop working links with external agencies to ensure a shared objective to improve school attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve communication meetings with external agencies to raise the profile of good school attendance and ensure that the objective is included in all individual plans where appropriate • Encourage referrals of children and young people missing from education where these internal partners are made aware that they are not receiving an education or have moved out of county • Invite external agencies to present to the AWS and head teachers so they are aware of the support opportunities these service can offer disengaged children and young people 	<p>March 2019</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2019</p>	<p>JA</p> <p>All AWS</p> <p>JA</p>
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APPENDIX 3

<<School logo>>

Dear parent/carer,

Super Attender's Challenge

Good attendance at school is essential for all pupils as it increases a child's chances of achieving their full potential. For this reason, it is a key priority for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and is why we have developed a new School Attendance Strategy. To support the aims of the strategy, Rhondda Cynon Taf's Super Attender has launched his own challenge to encourage all primary aged pupils to be in school every day when they are well enough to do so. Super Attender will recognise the good attendance of pupils at the end of each term period, with individual pupils being recognised for their achievements using official data, overseen by the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

Prizes will be awarded to individual pupils who have achieved:

- 98% or above attendance in the term period;
- the most improved attendance (identified by the school); and,
- the individual who has overcome the most to attend (chosen by the school).

We are inviting all primary aged pupils from every Rhondda Cynon Taf school to take part and have a chance to be recognised as part of Super Attender's Challenge.

Ways your child can rise to Super Attender's challenge include:

- Attend school on their birthday and celebrate with their friends and teachers;
- Make sure you set an alarm clock so that they're at school in plenty of time for the first bell;
- Attend non-urgent doctor and dentist appointments outside of school time;
- Take time to spend with family during holiday times rather than term time.

These few ideas can make a big difference to your child's attendance and have a positive impact on their educational outcomes.

We welcome your support with this challenge and hope that the incentive of your child reaching their potential will encourage you both to build upon their previous attendance level.

If you have any queries relating to this initiative, please contact your local school or the Attendance and Wellbeing Service at aws@rctcbc.gov.uk. For more information about school attendance, please see www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolattendance

Yours faithfully,

<<Head Teacher>>

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

DATE

18th October 2018

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICE IN DISCUSSIONS
WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER (CLLR JOY ROSSER)**

Item: Draft School Attendance Strategy

Background Papers

None

Officer to contact:

Jess Allen