

**DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION &  
CHILDREN**

**Our Vision ...is a community where children are  
safe and nurtured and learners of all ages are  
supported to achieve their full educational  
potential.**

**SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE  
UPDATE**

**March 2016**



**Safeguarding Children and  
Improving Education Standards for All**

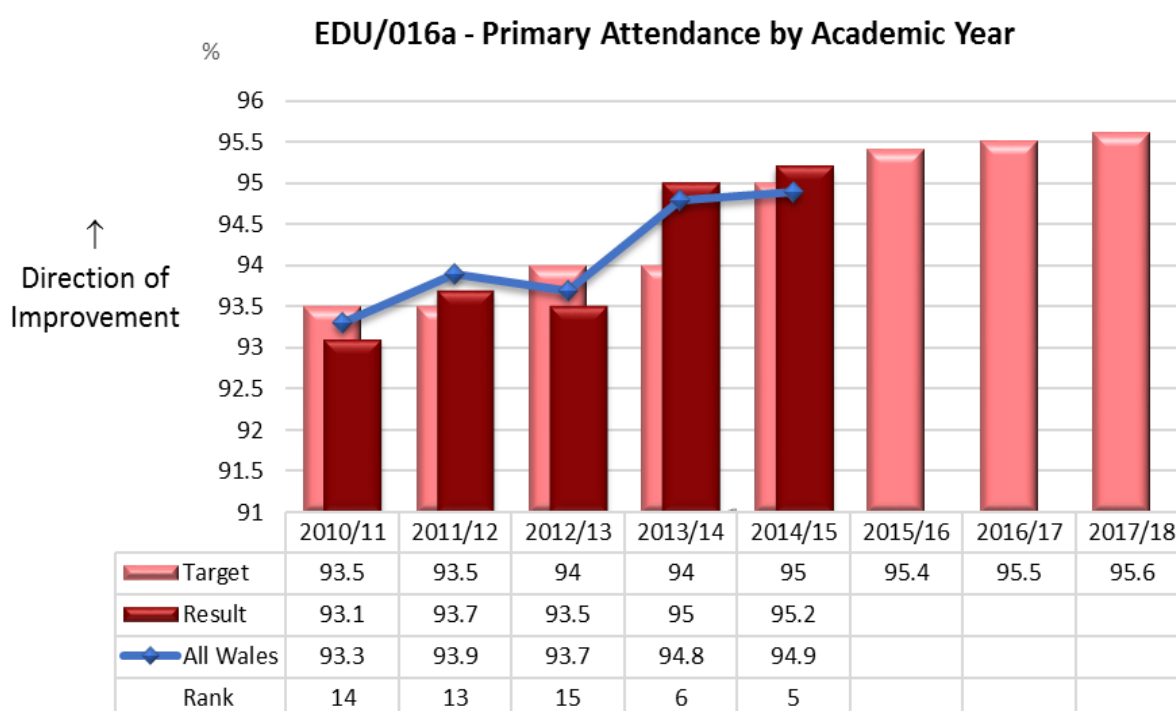


# ATTENDANCE DATA



## Attendance in Primary Schools

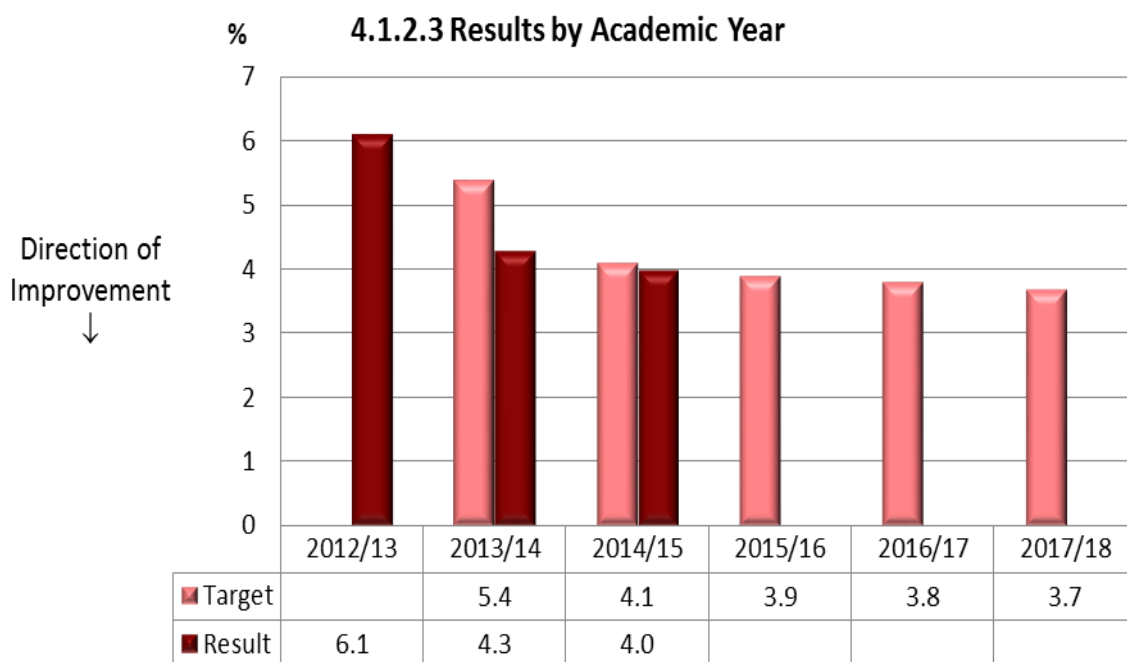
- Attendance in primary schools in Carmarthenshire had been increasing steadily for several years.
- Attendance has increased significantly in the last two years.
- In 2014-15 our Primary schools achieved **95.2%** overall attendance (an improvement of 0.2%)
- Carmarthenshire is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in Wales (improving from 15<sup>th</sup> in 2012/13), 0.6% adrift of the best performing Welsh LA, Monmouthshire (95.8%)



## Carmarthenshire as compared to other Local Authorities

| Year    | All Wales Primary Attendance | Carmarthenshire Primary Attendance | Carmarthenshire Position |
|---------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2011/12 | 93.9%                        | 93.7%                              | 13                       |
| 2012/13 | 93.7%                        | 93.5%                              | 15                       |
| 2013/14 | 94.8%                        | 95%                                | 6                        |
| 2014/15 | 94.9%                        | 95.2%                              | 5                        |

- Authorised absence from Primary Schools has reduced from at **6.1%** in 2012-13 to **4.0%** in 2014/15 which is below the Welsh average of 4.1%



- Carmarthenshire Primary Schools' quartile for attendance within their Free School Meals benchmark group has been improving over the last three years.
- The % of schools in the 1st quartile has increased by 19% whilst the % in the 4<sup>th</sup> quartile has decreased by 20%.

#### **% of Primary schools in each Quartile for last three years**

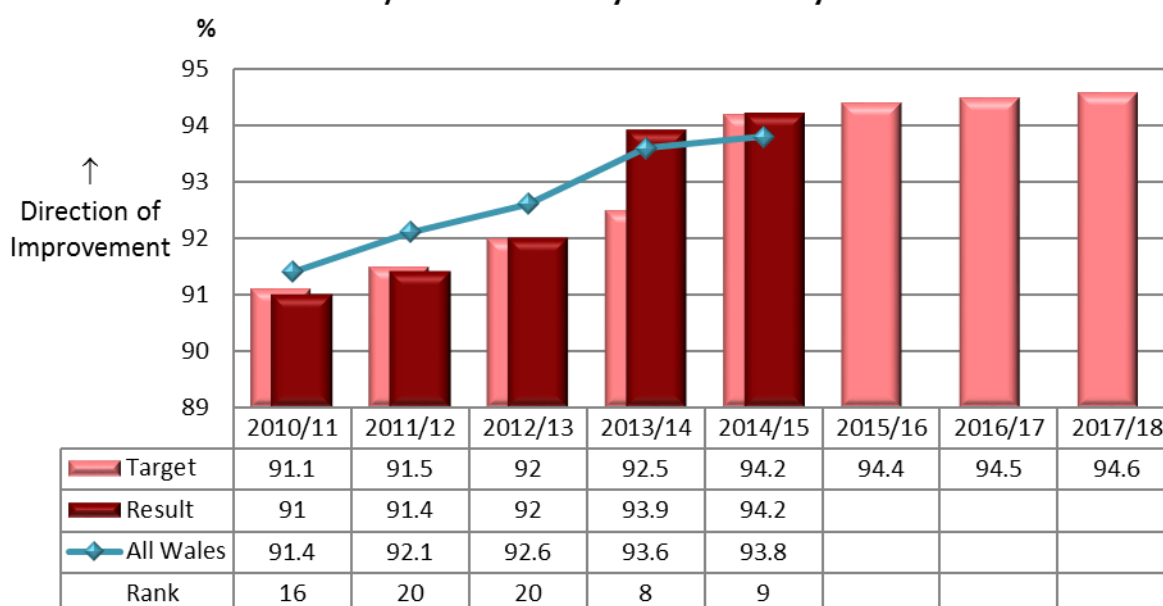
|                   | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Quartile 1</b> | 16%     | 30%     | 35%     |
| <b>Quartile 2</b> | 24%     | 18%     | 21%     |
| <b>Quartile 3</b> | 17%     | 22%     | 22%     |
| <b>Quartile 4</b> | 43%     | 29%     | 23%     |

- To help schools to maintain a focus on attendance, the authority is analysing data for every primary school on a termly basis, extracting attendance information entered into School Management Information Systems by schools.

## Attendance in Secondary Schools

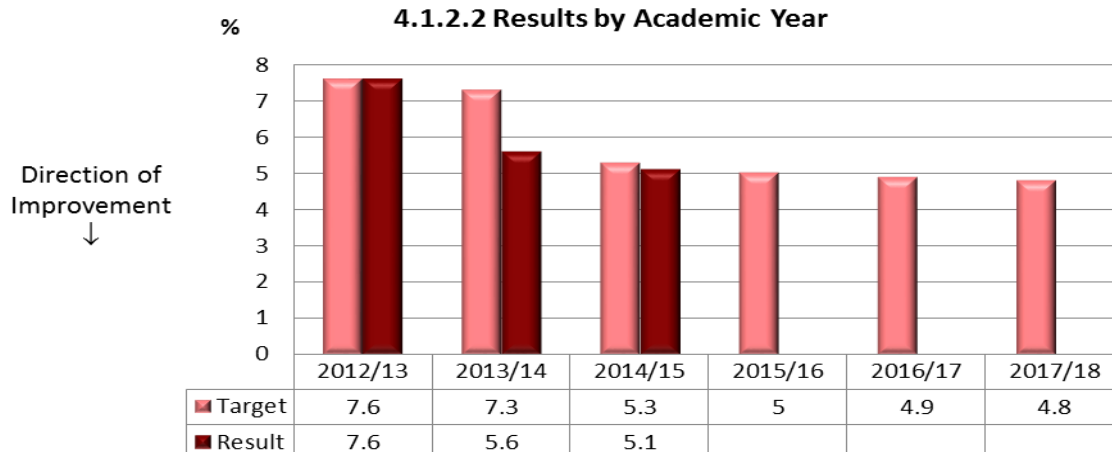
- Attendance in Carmarthenshire's secondary schools has been improving steadily for several years, and has been above the Welsh average for the last two.
- In 2014-15 our Secondary schools achieved **94.2%** overall attendance (an improvement of 0.3%)
- Carmarthenshire is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in Wales (improving from 20<sup>th</sup> two years ago), 0.5% adrift of the best performing Welsh LA, Vale of Glamorgan (94.7%)

EDU/016b - Secondary Attendance by Academic Year



- Authorised absence which at **7.6%** in 2012-13, was the highest in Wales, has reduced to **5.3%** which is still higher than the Welsh average of 4.9%, whilst unauthorised, at 0.8%, remains one of the lowest in Wales

4.1.2.2 Results by Academic Year

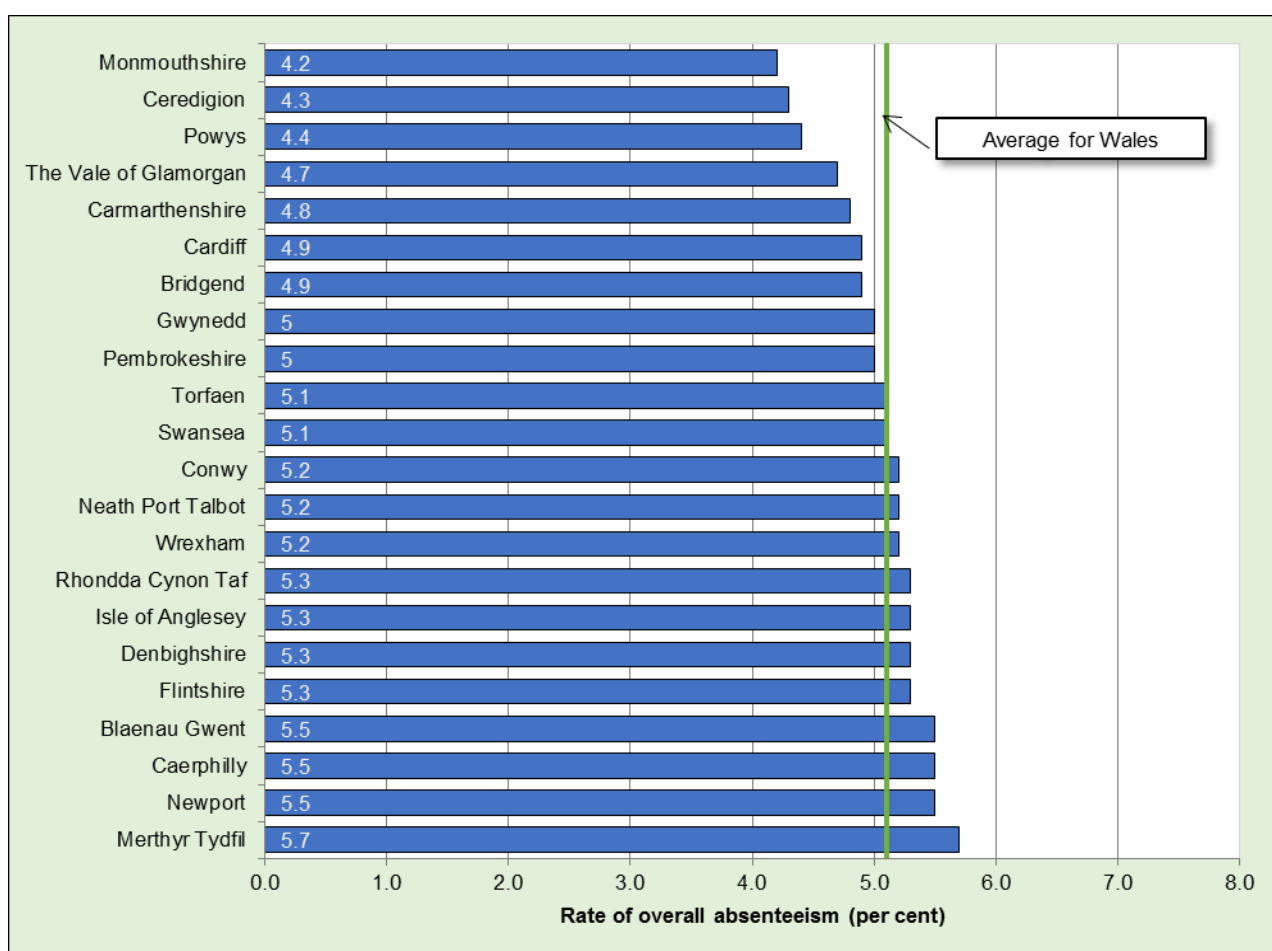


- Carmarthenshire Secondary schools quartile performance for attendance within their Free School Meals benchmark group has been improving over the last three years.
- For 2014-15 8 out of 12 schools performed at or above their expected benchmark with 6 schools in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> quartile as compared to 1 school in 2012-13

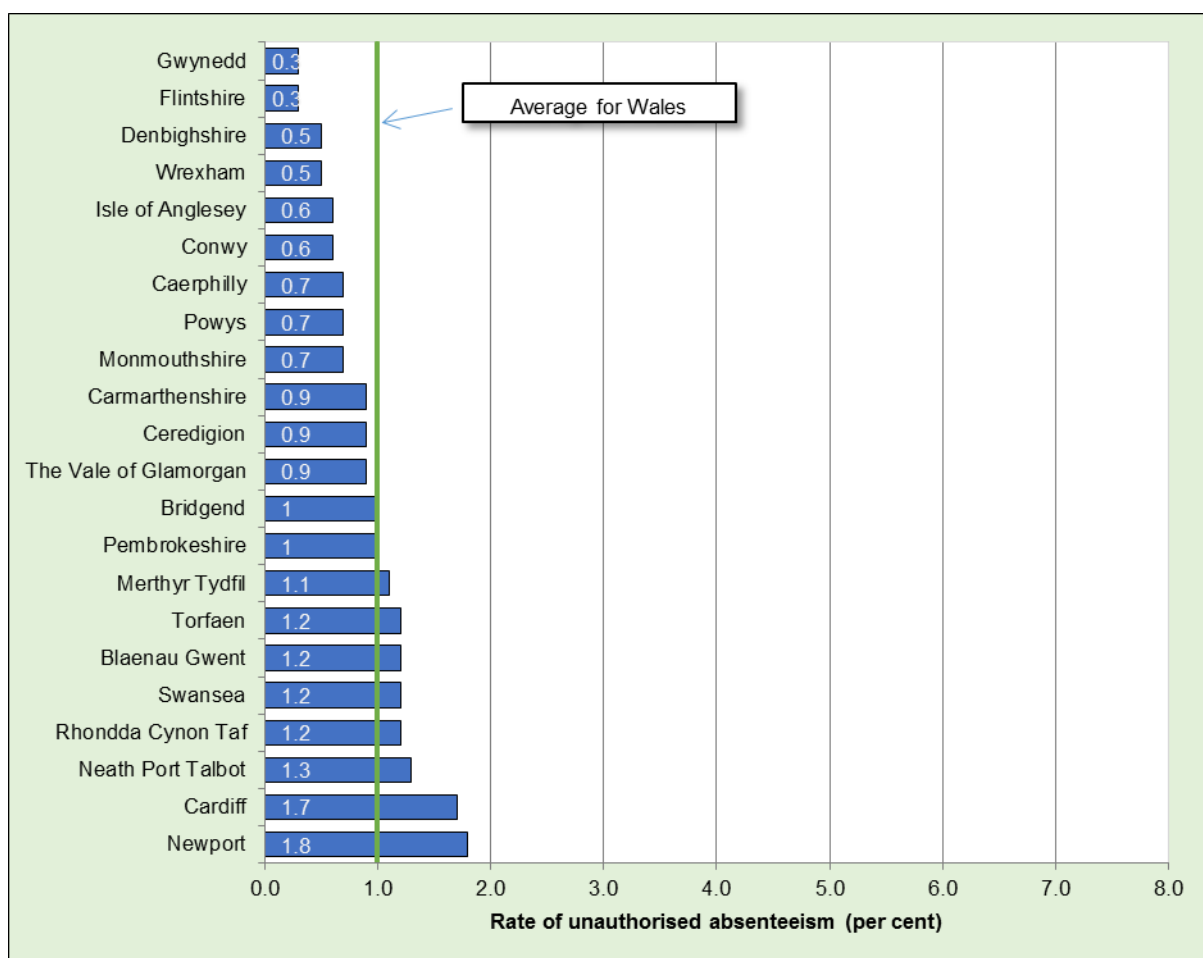
| Current FSM Band |                      | 2012/13                         |          | 2013/14                         |          | 2014/15                         |          |   |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|----------|---|
|                  |                      | % of half-day sessions attended | Quartile | % of half-day sessions attended | Quartile | % of half-day sessions attended | Quartile |   |
| 1                | Bro Myrddin          | 93.0                            | 4        | 95.3                            | 1        | <b>95.5</b>                     | <b>1</b> | ↔ |
| 1                | Dyffryn Taf          | 92.4                            | 4        | 95.1                            | 2        | <b>95.3</b>                     | <b>1</b> | ↑ |
| 1                | Strade               | 94.1                            | 3        | 94.7                            | 3        | <b>95.0</b>                     | <b>2</b> | ↑ |
| 2                | Maes Y Gwendraeth    | 91.5                            | 4        | 94.0                            | 3        | <b>94.5</b>                     | <b>2</b> | ↑ |
| 2                | Queen Elizabeth High | 92.6                            | 4        | 93.6                            | 4        | <b>94.0</b>                     | <b>3</b> | ↑ |
| 2                | Emlyn                | 92.3                            | 4        | 93.8                            | 4        | <b>93.9</b>                     | <b>4</b> | ↔ |
| 2                | Bro Dinefwr          | 90.5                            | 4        | 93.7                            | 4        | <b>93.2</b>                     | <b>4</b> | ↔ |
| 3                | Dyffryn Aman         | 91.4                            | 4        | 93.3                            | 3        | <b>93.7</b>                     | <b>3</b> | ↔ |
| 3                | Bryngwyn School      | 91.5                            | 4        | 93.7                            | 2        | <b>93.9</b>                     | <b>3</b> | ↓ |
| 3                | St John Lloyd        | 92.2                            | 3        | 93.5                            | 3        | <b>94.0</b>                     | <b>3</b> | ↔ |
| 4                | Glan-y-Mor           | 90.7                            | 4        | 93.2                            | 2        | <b>94.1</b>                     | <b>1</b> | ↑ |
| 4                | Coedcae              | 92.2                            | 1        | 93.1                            | 2        | <b>93.6</b>                     | <b>2</b> | ↔ |

- To support schools to maintain a focus on attendance, the authority is analysing data for every secondary school on a half-termly basis, extracting attendance information entered into School Management Information Systems by schools
- Further analysis of the attendance code data highlighted the following general messages:
  - Overall attendance levels have **improved** from **93.9%** in 2013/14 to **94.2%**- an improvement of 0.3% (this is equivalent to the target for 2014/15).
  - 11 schools have **improved** their attendance levels from academic year 2013/14 (ranging from 0.1% to 0.8%); 1 school has **declined** (by 0.5%)
  - Authorised absence has **improved** from 5.6% in 2013/14 to **5.1%** (an improvement of 0.5%).
  - All schools have **improved** their authorised absence levels (ranging from 4.2% to 5.9%, last year it was 4.6% to 6.1%).
  - Unauthorised absence rate has **declined** from 0.5% to 0.7%, but is still one of the best in Wales when compared with 2013/14 data.
  - 5 schools have seen their unauthorised absence levels decline as compared to 2013/14.

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (codes **I** and **M**) account for **4.7%** (140,834 sessions) of a total of **5.1%** authorised absences.
- Unauthorised absence has increased from 0.5% (end of year 2013/14) to **0.7%**:
  - **G** (family holiday not agreed) is 0.15% (4,547 sessions)
  - **O** (other unauthorised) is 0.58% (17,505 sessions)
  - **U** (arrived after register closed) is 0.01% (177 sessions)
- Code **N** (no reason for absence yet provided) has decreased from end of year 2013/14 by 51 sessions. There are now 24 sessions instead of 75 (Only 2 schools have code **N**: Dyffryn Aman and QE High).
- The average across schools using code **L** (late but arrived before register closed) has increased from 1.29% (end of 2013/14) to 1.49%, now a range from 0.34% to 3.09%, which suggests different approaches may still be used



**Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary and special schools, by local authority, 2014/15**



**Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary and special schools, by local authority, 2014/15**





# **Education Welfare Service (EWS) Update**

## 1. Key Facts

- Only schools can refer into the Education Welfare Service.
- Schools can refer every pupil with a school attendance level of less than 85% where the main cause is unauthorised absence.
- The referral process is electronic/on-line which helps the Education Welfare Service track every referral, collate the data and provide termly monitoring.
- The Team consists of-
  - 1 Team Manager
  - 1 Senior Social Work Practitioner
  - 4 Social Workers: Schools
  - 8.5 Family Engagement Workers.

This service structure enables the Education Welfare Service to offer a tiered approach to supporting families and addressing school attendance issues.

The EWS takes a **Family Engagement** model of intervention. It works intensively with the family to overcome their difficulties in order to engage more fully in the parenting and education of their children.

The Service also provides:

- **Intensive Family Engagement Worker** support and parenting support for families referred by schools.
- **Intensive Social Worker Schools** support for families referred by schools where there are concerns that the lack of education is indicative of neglect but families do not meet the threshold of social services.
- **RAP** (Regular Attendance and Punctuality) workshops for every Year 6 Class in every Primary School in Carmarthenshire.
- **Intensive family and child support** over school holidays to aid transition and keep in touch.
- **Family group work** over school holidays to support good attitudes to school attendance.
- **Play and Chat** Workshops for parents at Family Centres and ICC's addressing school attendance issues.
- **Community information sharing and awareness raising** for Education Starts at Home (Welsh Government programme).
- **Group work** in Secondary and Primary schools for children with poor attendance, highlighting issues and consequences.
- **Issuing certificates** for good attendance to pupils at school at the request of schools and attending prize evenings.
- **Direct intensive parenting work** with families referred by schools to improve parenting capacity.

- **TAF working and key-working** to ensure families are linked in with community services to support them.
- **Chaperone training, child performance licensing and monitoring of child performance agencies** (as directed by Welsh Government).
- **Child employment licensing**, monitoring and training for child employers (as directed by Welsh Government).
- **Prosecution** of parents who fail to engage with improving their child's attendance as defined by the Education Act 2006.
- **Initial Social Work Assessments** for families referred by schools where there are concerns that the lack of education is indicative of neglect.

## 2. Service Delivery

All schools have named member of staff to link with and provide a consistent service for schools and families. There is also a 0.5 Family Engagement Worker post that provides flexible cover within the team depending on the needs of schools.

Across the County the service is distributed as follows:

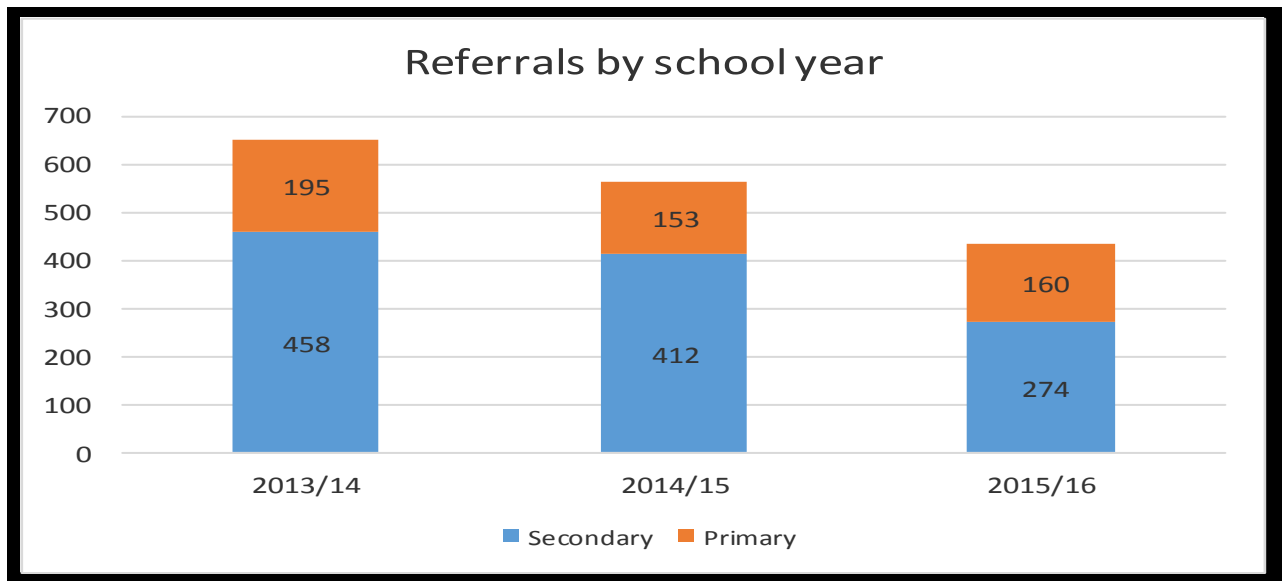
| AREA                                     | Carmarthen/East   | Dinefwr   | Llanelli East   | Llanelli West  |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Schools</b>                           | QE High<br>Dyffryn Taf<br>Ysgol Gyfun<br>Emlyn<br><br>Feeder Primary<br>Schools | Amman Valley<br>Ysgol Bro<br>Dinefwr<br><br>Feeder Primary<br>Schools | Coedcae<br>Bryngwyn<br>St John Lloyd<br><br>Feeder Primary<br>Schools | Glan y Mor<br>Bro Myrddin<br>Ysgol Strade<br>Maes y<br>Gwendraeth<br><br>Feeder Primary<br>Schools |
| <b>Social Worker:<br/>Schools</b>        | Darren Simpson  | Anwen Barker  | Emma Owen   | Hannah Morgan  |
| <b>Family<br/>Engagement<br/>Workers</b> | Kathryn M Davies<br>Sarah John  | Antonia Delli-Bovi<br>Simon Beecher                                   | Jen Jones<br>Kathryn Davies<br>Debbie Philips                         | Phil Jones<br>Debbie Phillips  |

## 3. Referrals to the Education Welfare Service

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service are electronic and the case management system is on *Carefirst*. This enables the Service to track all referrals and provide monitoring and oversight of the number of referrals.

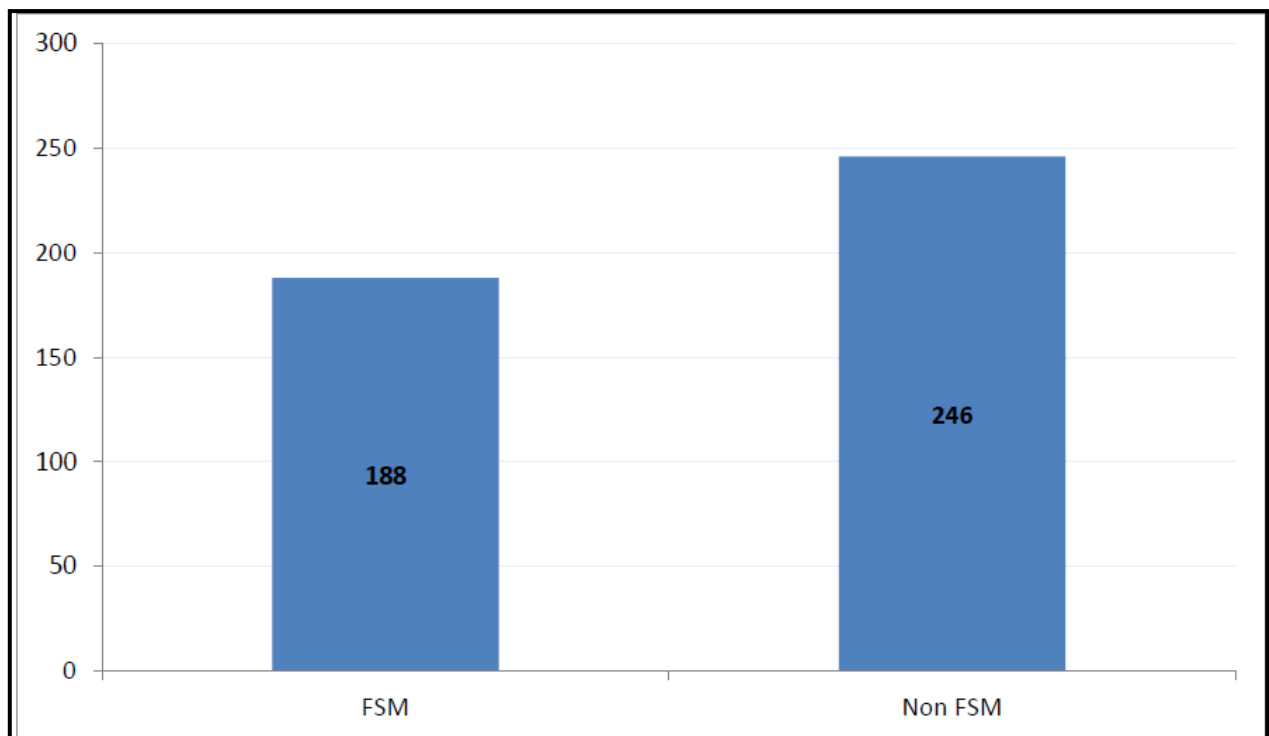
In the 2013/14 academic year there were 195 children referred to the service by Primary Schools and 458 by Secondary Schools. In 2014/15 this decreased for both. Referrals to the Service for this academic year (2015/16) demonstrates an increase in referrals from Primary Schools while referrals from Secondary Schools appears to be similar to last year. The increase in referrals from Primary is pleasing to note as the Service has pro-actively

engaged with all Year 6 Primary classes and concentrates, wherever possible, on early intervention.

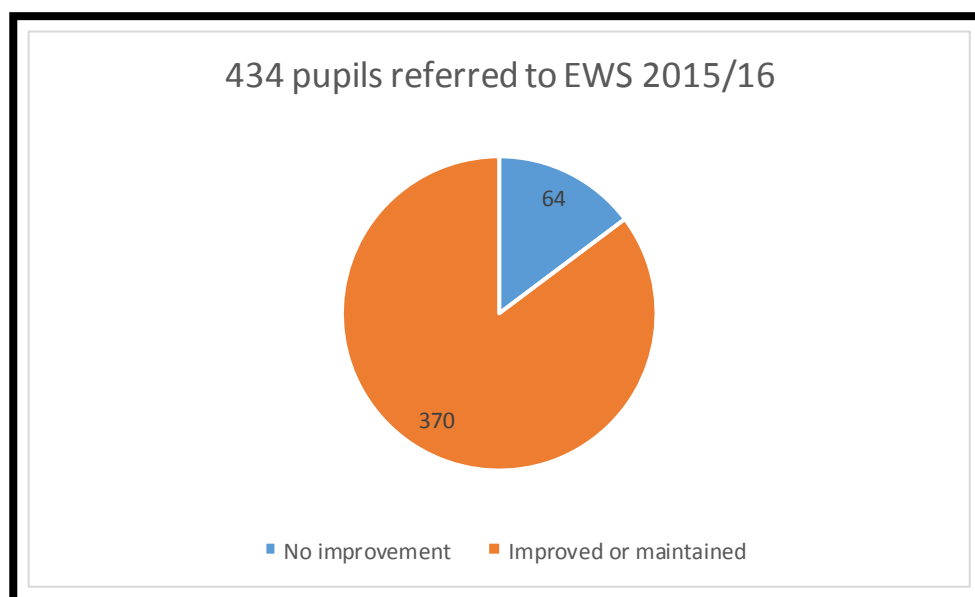


*\*NB: data for 2015/16 is from September 2015 to end of March 2016 (2 terms).*

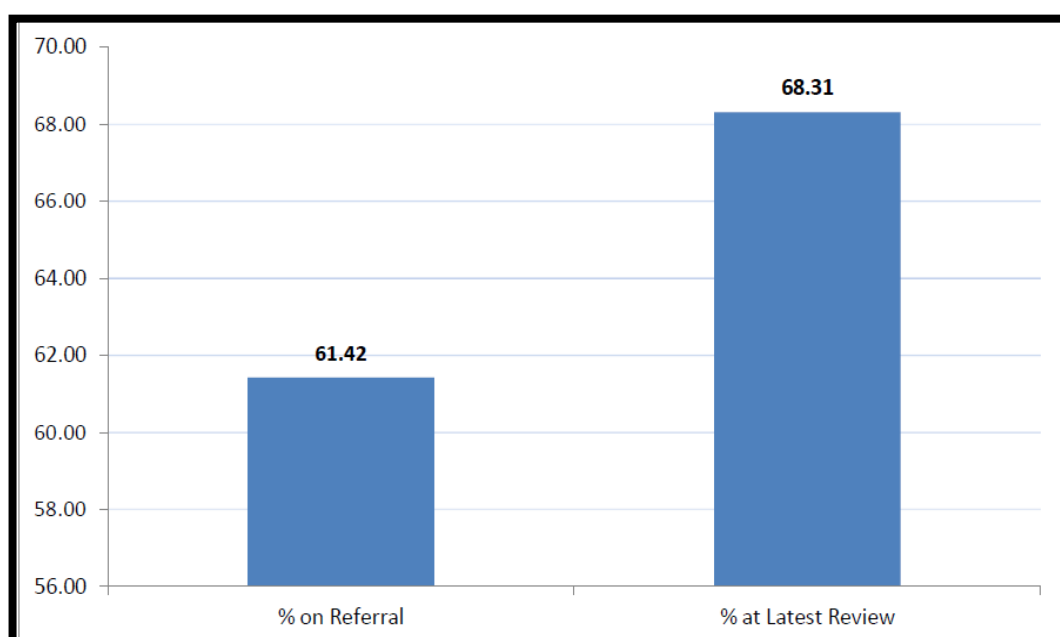
Of those pupils referred 2015/16 188 were free school meal pupils and 246 were not.



Of the 434 pupils referred so far this academic year school attendance has improved or been maintained for 370 of them. For 64 pupils their school attendance has continued to reduce.



For this academic year (2015/16) the average % pupil attendance on referral to the Service was 61.42%. At the latest review the average pupil attendance was 68.31% which is an improvement of 6.89% on average.



The Service records the attendance rate of every pupil referred and meets regularly with schools to provide feedback on interventions and progress.

On the whole the Service is well received in schools and it is evident that the intervention of the Service promotes re-engagement and increased school attendance.

However, our monitoring system highlights that there does not appear to be a consistent approach of referring into the Education Welfare Service. While there are some schools who make good use of the Education Welfare Service some schools do not use the service as **frequently** or as **promptly** as they could.

Pupils with attendance of less than 85% can be referred to the Service. The following chart A indicates that to date this academic year 261 pupils referred into the Service had attendance of less than 69%. 37 of these pupils had attendance of less than 30%.

**Chart A: Number of referrals to EWS by % attendance (Sept 2015- March 2015)**

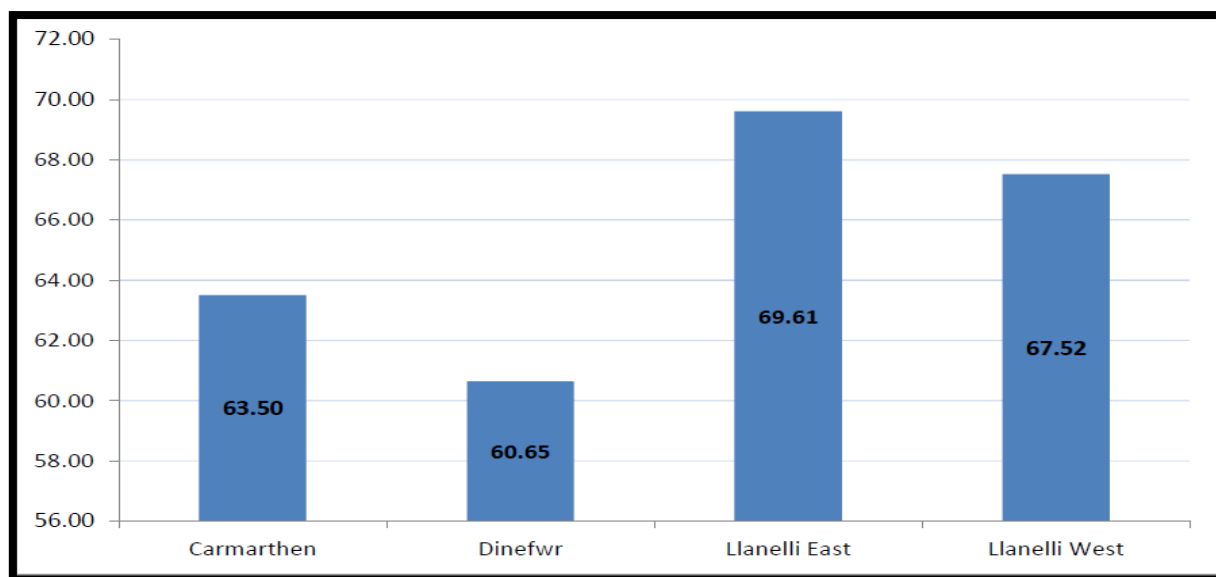
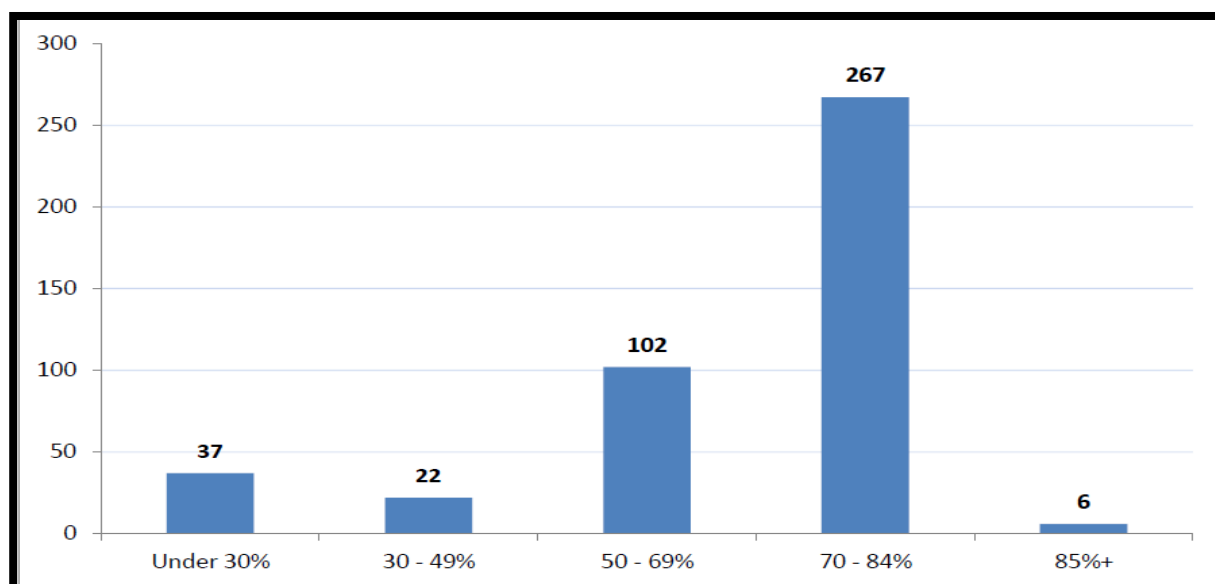


Chart B highlights that across the County schools often wait far too long before referring pupils to the service. The average pupil attendance % of pupils referred differs quite significantly from school to school.

**Chart B: Average School Attendance level on referral into EWS by geographical area (Sept 2015-March 2015)**



#### **4. Child Performance and Child Employment**

The Education Welfare Service oversees Child performance licensing and chaperone licensing and training, in line with revised guidance: The Children (Performances and Activities) (Wales) Regulations 2015 and “Keeping Young Performers Safe” (Welsh Government 2015). The Education Welfare Service has reviewed the Local Authority’s licensing processes, in line with the updated guidance, and has developed and implemented a programme of training for licensed chaperones to ensure that the requirements of the new regulations are met. In addition, the service has provided direct support to a number of local performance companies to ensure that they are compliant with the new requirements.

Further to this, Child Employment Licensing falls under the remit of the Education Welfare service. This involves overseeing the issuing of work permits for children, in line with statutory guidance and providing advice and direct support to local businesses to ensure that they comply with the regulations.

#### **5. Fixed Penalty Notices**

The Welsh Government (WG) Education (Penalty Notice)(Wales) Regulations 2013 states that Local Authorities (LAs) are required by law to adhere to the Education Act 1996 section 444 to include penalty notices as one of the interventions to promote better school attendance.

Across Wales there have been successful legal challenges to the issuing of Fixed Penalty Fines to parents who take their children on holidays during term time.

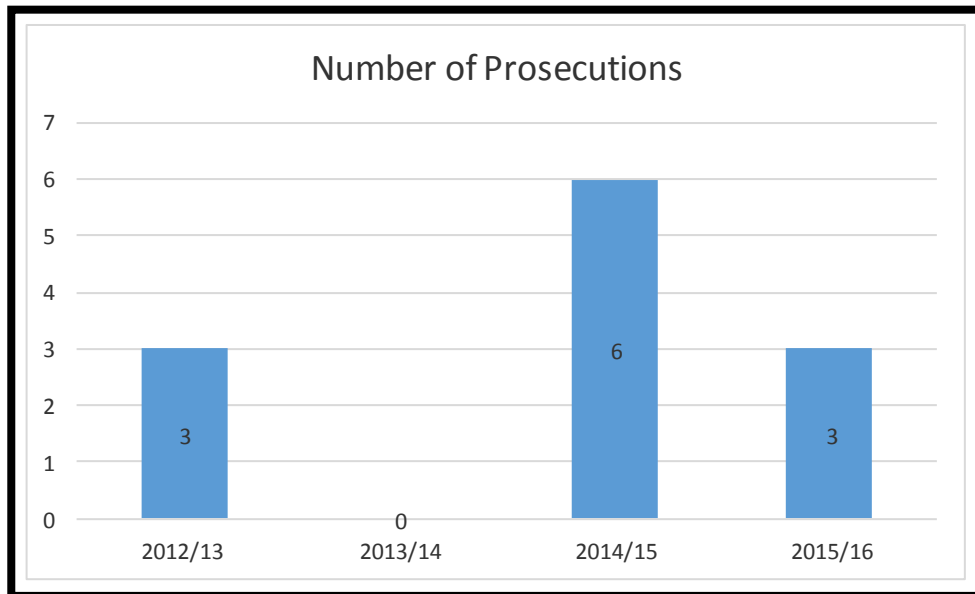
The EWS will issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents within an agreed legal context as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Carmarthenshire are currently in the process of reviewing the Code of Conduct for the issuing of penalty notices for nonattendance and this is currently being reviewed by the Local Authority’s legal Department. Once this process is complete, the Education Welfare Service will ensure that the revised Code is applied consistently and equitably across the Local Authority, ensuring that the issuing of notices is based on the clear threshold criteria outlined in the revised Code of Conduct.

#### **6. Prosecutions and Truancy Patrols**

Courts require the authority to demonstrate that every effort has been made to engage the family, secure school attendance and resolve issues before considering prosecution. The Team Manager meets monthly with our Legal Department to consider thresholds for prosecution and legal intervention.

So far this year (2015/16) the Service is in the process of prosecuting 3 families, with a further 3 families due to be prosecuted by the end of the academic year.



### Truancy Patrols

The Education Welfare Service works in collaboration with schools and community police services to carry out truancy patrols on a termly basis in the 3 main towns- Ammanford, Llanelli and Carmarthen.

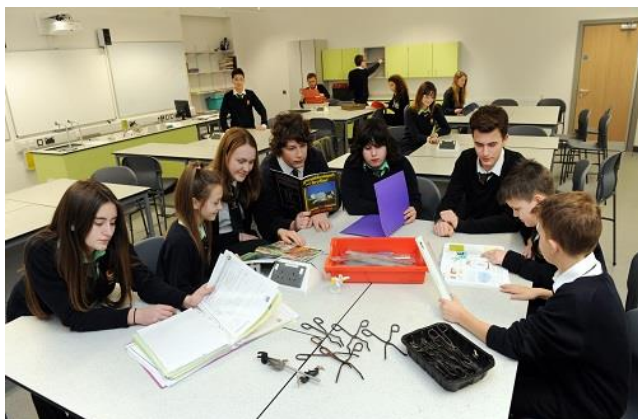
## 7. Moving forward

The Service has a number of key target areas for 2016. The Education Welfare Service will:

- Work more closely with Challenge Advisors to support schools in meeting their identified attendance targets.
- Continue to build upon and extend the RAP delivery and group work with schools.
- Implement the revised Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices and issue penalties in line with approved guidance.
- Re-draft and re-issue School Attendance leaflets based on changes in the application of the fixed penalties.
- Raise further awareness with employers and performance companies in relation to child employment and performance regulations.
- It is planned that the Young Carers Service will sit within the Education Welfare Service in 2016.
- The Education Welfare Service will develop clear information for professionals and families on their role and legal responsibilities in line with the new Social Services and Wellbeing Act.
- Develop standardised feedback forms for schools, pupils and families on the involvement of the Service.



## PRESS RELEASE, AUGUST 2015- ATTENDANCE IMPROVES AT CARMARTHENSHIRE SCHOOLS



Attendance figures across Carmarthenshire have improved with schools reporting an all-time high of 94.1%.

Parents and carers are being thanked for their co-operation in helping the county achieve the figures, which are well above the Welsh average of 93.8%.

It comes as new Welsh Government data shows that the number of pupils being absent from secondary schools across Wales is at the lowest level ever recorded.

Education Minister Huw Lewis has welcomed the falling rate as excellent news.

Carmarthenshire's education executive board member Cllr Gareth Jones said: "Improving attendance has been a key priority for Carmarthenshire and further improvement in attendance rates has been realised with our schools achieving an all-time high of 94.1% which is well above the Welsh average of 93.8%.

"Authorised absence has improved and our unauthorised absence rate is still one of the best in Wales.

"This is primarily due to co-operation from parents and carers, the diligence of schools and input from the local authority's Education Welfare Service and school data team.

"I would like to personally thank all those involved in helping schools achieve these attendance rates."

The main responsibility of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) is to promote regular attendance at school.

Officers give support and advice on regulations regarding non-attendance, child employment, performance, and chaperones.

To secure regular school attendance, they work in partnership with pupils and their families, schools, community support services and other professionals such as social workers, youth services, and educational psychologists.

A school may refer a family to the [EWS](#) if a child's school attendance is of concern.

## Abbreviations

|      |                                     |
|------|-------------------------------------|
| CBT  | Cognitive Behaviour Therapy         |
| DTT  | Distance Travelled Tool             |
| ERW  | Education through Regional Working  |
| EWS  | Education Welfare Service           |
| FEW  | Family Engagement Workers           |
| FPNs | Fixed Penalty Notices               |
| ICC  | Integrated Community Centre         |
| JAFF | Joint Assessment for Families       |
| LA   | Local Authority                     |
| LAC  | Looked After Children               |
| OCD  | Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder       |
| QES  | Database and Case Management system |
| RAP  | Regular Attendance and Punctuality  |
| SBSW | School Based Social Worker          |
| TAF  | Team around the Family              |
| WG   | Welsh Government                    |