

LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2018

SUBJECT: EXCLUSIONS, ATTENDANCE & EOTAS

How is the Local Authority supporting schools to minimise the number of exclusions and to maximising pupil attendance, which ultimately ensures the best learner outcomes are achieved for all pupils?

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Report Summary

This report provides an analysis, evaluation and next steps of the following:

- 2017/18 Exclusion's performance across all Torfaen schools plus 3 year trend
- 2017/18 schools attendance performance in Torfaen and the impact of the new Torfaen attendance strategy 'STRIVE FOR 95+'. Methods of analysis include:
 - Actual attendance for 2017/18
 - Difference from agreed target for 2017/18
 - 3 year trend
 - Bench Mark Quartile (BMQ) data 2017/18
 - 1 year trajectory
- 2017/18 EOTAS data and information

Further analysis can be found within the appendices to this report.

1. Introduction and Scrutiny Activity

- 1.1 One of the biggest concerns within education is the huge increase in pressure across the nation in terms of children finding their ways out of mainstream schools. These issues cover not only exclusions and attendance but also registering as elective home school provision, pupils registered out of year, managed moves, plus other pressure areas that are seeing an increasing number of pupils not seeing school life through to year 11.
- 1.2 With regards to attendance, the Strive for 95 campaign was launched in January 2018 and although it is still in its first year we have seen an improvement in attendance rates.
- 1.3 With regards to exclusion rates, we have seen significant improvement in secondary school exclusion rates and attendance, particularly in Abersychan School and Cwmbran High.

However, there still remains a persistent issue with high numbers of exclusions in a small number of schools.

- 1.4 Attendance and exclusions are critical issues – when children are not in school they are not learning. Additionally, an exclusion can be a very devastating period in a child’s life and a step that should never be taken lightly.
- 1.5 Extensive work around exclusions has been carried out and although the number of exclusions remains too high, there have been some good improvements in this area in some schools. The subject of exclusions was also an area of focus during a recent meeting between Estyn, the Chief Officer for Education, Executive Member, Chief Executive and Leader, and identified as an issue which remains a concern.
- 1.6 It is vital that the authority looks at every aspect of our response as to how we best support children in getting to school every day and ensure that every relevant party is aware of their responsibilities in achieving that. It is the local authority’s position to minimise the use of exclusions and maximise attendance, as far as is possible, to ensure children remain engaged in education.

2. Information/Results

2.1 Exclusions

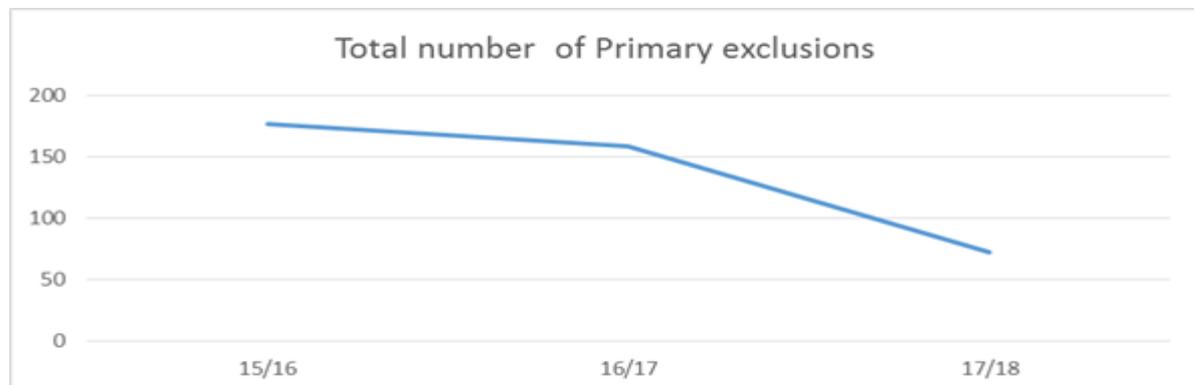
Over the past eight years the pattern of fixed term exclusions in Torfaen schools has changed significantly over time due to Torfaen implementing strategies that have been successful in helping to reduce both the number of fixed term exclusions and days lost to exclusions. (Appendix 2)

- 2.2 In 2010-2018 the total number of days lost to exclusions has reduced by **52%**. Broken down this equates to 50% in secondary, 58% in primary and 72% in the PRU.
- 2.3 Since 2010, the number of exclusions has been reduced overall by **31%** (29% in secondary, 51% in primary and 21% in the PRU).

2.4 Primary Exclusions

2.5 Analysis of exclusions by school over the last 3 years

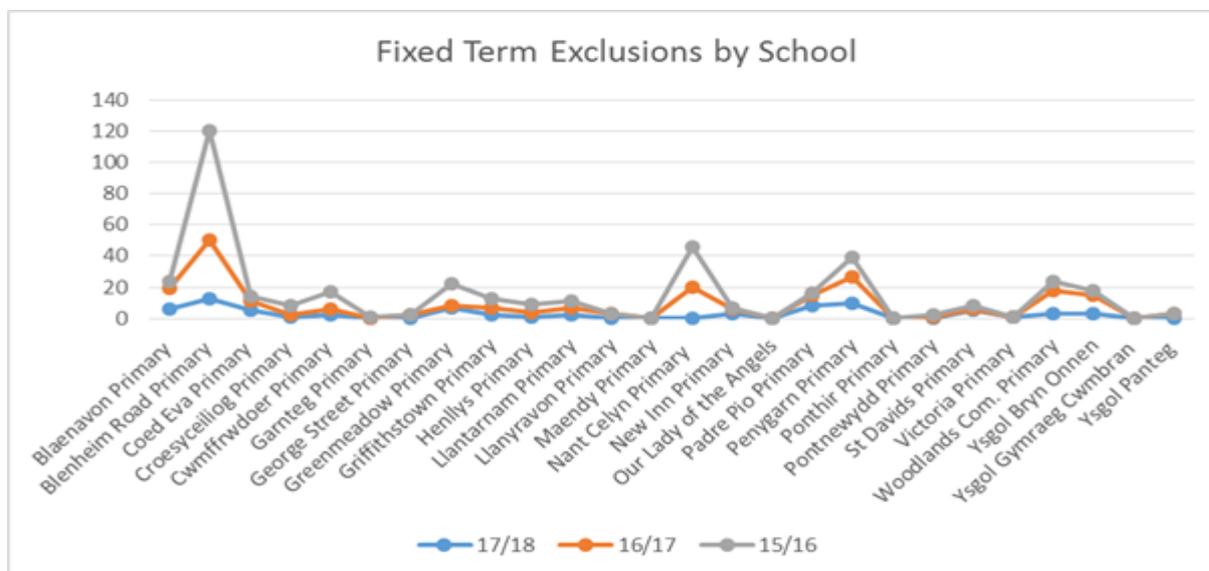
The 2017/18 data shows a notable reduction in the number of primary exclusions over the last 3 years they reduced from 177 in 15/16 to 72 in 17/18 which is 59.3% reduction.



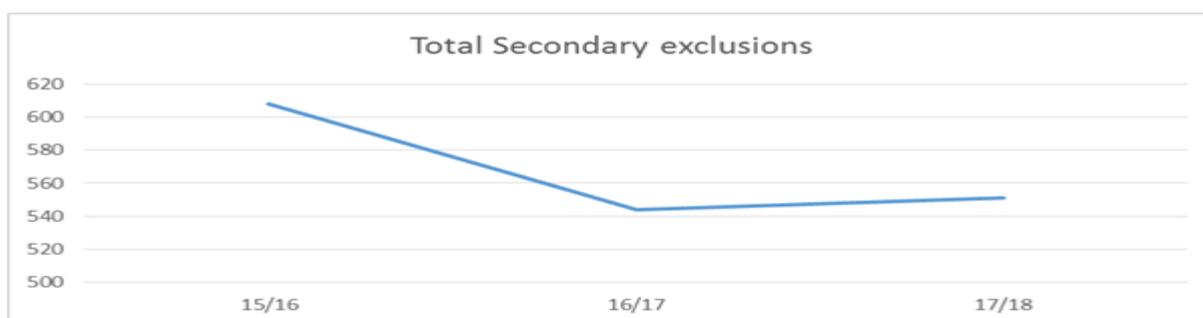
- 2.6 The exclusions issued for 5 days or less has decreased from 153 in 16/17 to 67 in 17/18 which is a reduction of 56.2%. The number of exclusions issued for 6 days or more also decreased from 6 to 5, and the number of permanent exclusions issued also fell from 2 to 1.

2.7 Primary Fixed Term Exclusions

In 2017/18, 10 primary schools issued 0 fixed term exclusions with a further 9 issuing less than 5 day exclusions during the year. 7 schools issued more than 5 day exclusions. The highest number of exclusions issued for five days in 2017/18 was at Blenheim Road Primary with 13 in total. This is however, a significant reduction of the 57 exclusions in comparison to what was issued in 15/16 (70) - an 81.41% decrease. (Appendix 1)



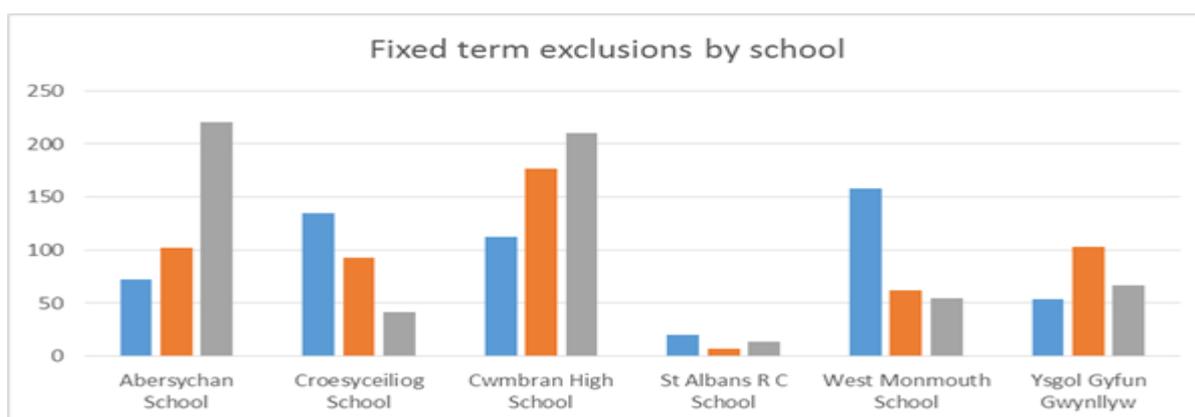
- 2.8 There were 3 schools who issued more 5 day fixed term exclusions in 17/18 than in 16/7. These were Greenmeadow Primary who increased from 1 exclusion in 16/17 to 7 in 17/18 and Padre Pio who increased by 1 exclusion in 17/18 from the previous year and St David's 1 exclusion 16/17 to 5 in 17/18.
- 2.9 There is a similar picture with the number of days lost to fixed term exclusion for pupils in primary schools with a significant reduction over the last 3 years. This is a 52.7% reduction from 343.5 days issued in 15/16 to 162.5 days issued in 17/18.
- 2.10 Again 10 schools had 0 days lost to exclusion, 6 schools issued less than 5 days exclusion and 5 schools issued under 10 days exclusion.
- 2.11 Penygarn Primary had the highest number of days lost to exclusion at 28.5 followed by Blaenavon Primary having 22 days lost. Both schools, have however, decreased their total days lost from 16/17 by 41 days and 26 days respectively. (Appendix 1)
- 2.12 3 Primary schools accounted for 46% of the total number of exclusions issued in 2017/18.
- 2.13 As shown on Appendix 3, there were 44 pupils who received a fixed term exclusion in 2017/18. This is 0.6% of the primary population of pupils. Y5 and Y6 had the highest number of pupils receiving an exclusion making up 52.27% of the pupils receiving an exclusion.
- 2.14 **Secondary Exclusions**
- 2.15 The academic year 2017/18 data shows an increase of 7 fixed term exclusions in comparison to 2016/17, however this is a reduction of 57 exclusions from 2015/16. (Appendix 1)
- 2.16 The number of exclusions for 5 days or less increased by 5 in 17/18 in comparison to the previous year. This is, however, 59 fewer exclusions than in 15/16. The number of exclusions issued for 6 days or more increased in 17/18 from 14 to 16, this is the highest number of exclusions we have had for less than five days, over the 3 year period.



- 2.17 The number of permanent exclusions decreased from 6 in 2016/17 to 3 in 2017/18. In 2017/18 2 permanent exclusions were overturned at independent appeal.
- 2.18 The 2 secondary schools who issued the greatest number of exclusions in 2017/18 made up 53% of the total exclusions for secondary schools.

2.19 Fixed Term Exclusions

- 2.20 In 2017/18, 3 secondary schools (Abersychan, Cwmbran High and Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw) reduced the number of fixed term exclusions they issued compared to the previous year. Abersychan reduced exclusions by 29.41%, Cwmbran High by 36.7% and Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw by 47.57%. (Appendix 1)



- 2.21 West Monmouth had a significant increase from 62 exclusions in 16/17 to 158 exclusions 17/18.
- 2.22 This was a rate of 19.97% exclusions per 100 pupils. West Monmouth's exclusions made up 28.67% of the total secondary fixed term exclusions issued in 2017/18.
- 2.23 With regards to the number of days lost by secondary pupils to fixed term exclusions there has been a decrease of 3.5 days in 2017/18 from the previous year, and a total decrease of 100 days lost to fixed term exclusions over the 3 year period.
- 2.24 There were 270 secondary school pupils who received a fixed exclusion in 2017/18. This is 4.95% of the secondary school population. Pupils in year 8 and year 10 made up 48% of the total pupils excluded. Year 11 pupil had the least pupils excluded. (Appendix 3)
- 2.25 The latest all Wales statistical release uses 2016/17 data and shows that Torfaen's fixed term exclusions of 5 days or less were 694 days out of 3669 days issued in the region. This is 18.9% of the regional total. The rate of exclusions per 1000 pupils puts us 4th position within the region. This rate is 11.9% higher than the welsh average. The rate of exclusion for 6 days and more in 2016/17 puts us 0.8 under the welsh average, 1.0 under the regional average and 3rd in the region. (Appendix 4)

2.26 When comparing the exclusion and performance data for 2017/18 there is no correlation between the schools who have higher numbers of exclusions and lower pupil performance. An example of this is at West Monmouth School who issued the greatest number of secondary exclusions but their Key Stage 3 and 4 performance has improved.

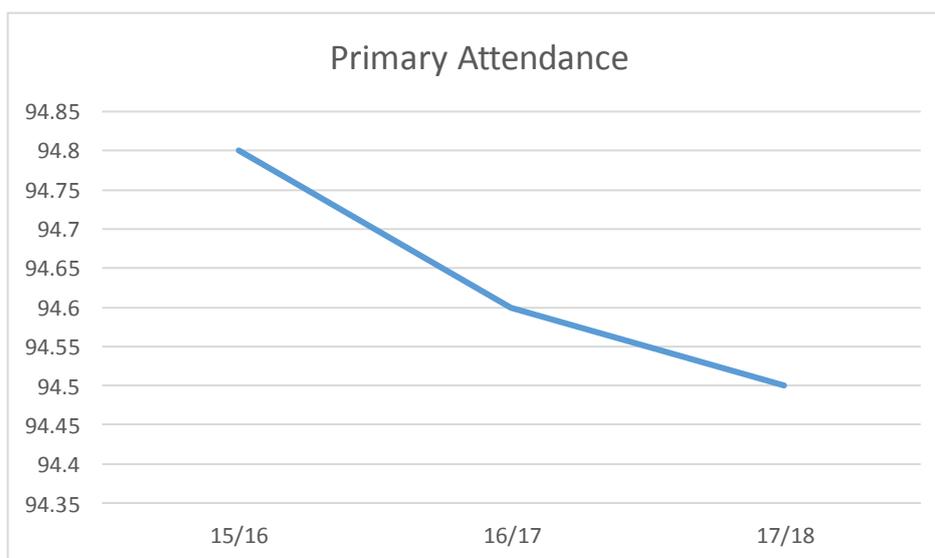
2.27 **Attendance**

2.28 Results of data analysed show a slight decrease at Torfaen’s overall primary schools attendance, whilst at secondary schools attendance, there is an improvement. This suggests that the implementation of the new Torfaen ‘STRIVE FOR 95+’ strategy is having a positive impact on secondary schools attendance (even though it is in the early stages of implementation). It is unclear at this point in time whether the strategy has had a positive effect on primary schools attendance, as comparative data is not yet available and local data is unverified.

2.29 **Primary Attendance (Unverified data)**

2.30 **Torfaen Primary Attendance - 3 year trend**

The overall attendance across primary schools during 2017/18 has decreased slightly by 0.1% to 94.5%. The overall attendance rate has follow a downward trend since 2015/16 when the overall attendance was 94.8%. (Please see attached, Appendix 5 for more information).



2.31 6 schools have increased their attendance over the past 3 years - Blaenavon, Cwmffwrdoer, Our Lady of the Angels, Pontnewydd, Victoria and Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran.

2.32 5 schools have increased their attendance from the previous year - Blaenavon, Blenheim, Griffithstown, Our Lady of the Angel and Padre Pio.

2.33 Ysgol Panteg’s attendance has remained static for the past 3 years.

2.34 **Torfaen Primary Bench Mark Quartile (BMQ) Data 2017/18**

BMQ 1	BMQ 2	BMQ 3	BMQ 4
3 schools	6 schools	5 schools	12 schools
Maendy	Garnteg	Coed Eva	Blaenavon

Our Lady of the Angel	Ponthir	Griffithstown	Blenheim
St. David's	Pontnewydd	Llantarnam	Croesyceiliog
	Woodlands	Y Bryn Onnen	Cwmffrwdroer
	Y G Cwmbbran	Y Panteg	George Street
			Greenmeadow
	Victoria		Henllys
			Llanyrafon
			Nant Celyn
			New Inn
			Padre Pio
			Penygarn

2.35 **BMQ 3 year trend**

2.36 4 schools that have remained in BMQ 4 for the past 3 years – Blaenavon, Greenmeadow, New Inn and Penygarn, however, Blaenavon has shown an increase in attendance by 0.4% for 2017/18, in comparison to previous years. (Appendix 6).

2.37 1 school has remained in BMQ 3 for the past 3 years – Ysgol Panteg, as attendance has remained static over this period.

2.38 3 schools have remained in BMQ 1 for the past 3 years – Maendy, Our Lady and St. David's. This is due to:

- strong commitment and drive for improving attendance
- clear protocols within their schools
- effective collaboration between schools and the EWS.
- consistent use of resources within the 'STRIVE FOR 95+' strategy

2.39 These schools will be encouraged to share their good practice across all primary schools.

2.40 **Attendance Targets 2017/18**

2.41 Only 2 schools exceeded their attendance target – Our Lady of the Angels (+0.1%) and Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbbran (+0.1%). (Appendix A3)

2.42 The remaining schools did not achieve their agreed targets, therefore this meant that Torfaen was below its overall attendance target of 96% by 1.5%.

2.43 **Attendance and performance 2017/18**

2.44 As noted, in the statement from the Cabinet Secretary for 2018/19, the following information will no longer be available for schools on Teacher Assessment performance:

- comparison with other local authorities (rank positions)
- school level data
- benchmark summaries

2.45 When comparing the attendance and performance data for 2017/18, there is no correlation between the schools who have lower attendance and lower pupil performance. An example of this is at Ysgol Bryn Onnen whose attendance has declined but their Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI) and Core Subject Indicator (CSI) performance has improved.

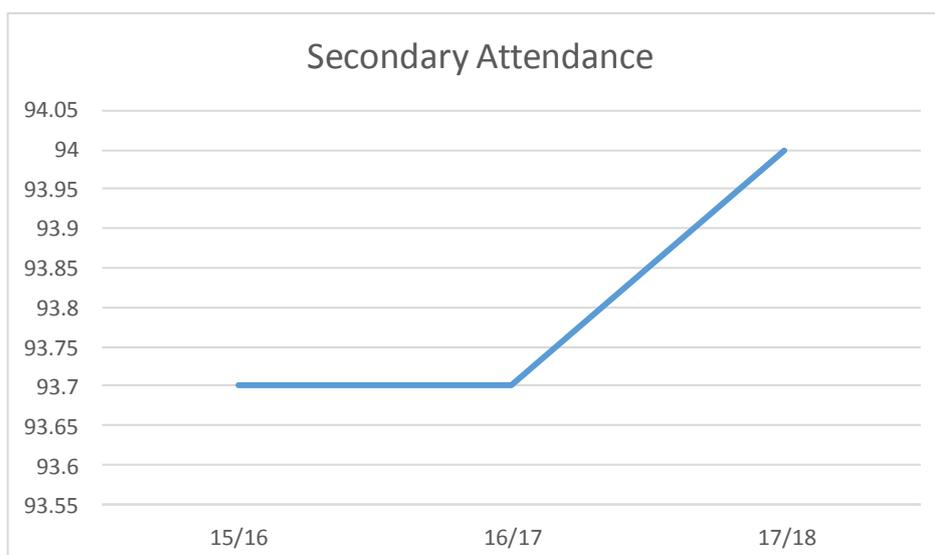
2.46 Persistent Absenteeism 3 year trend

2.47 Torfaen's persistent absenteeism has increased by 0.7% to 2.6% over the past 3 years. This is a priority for the Education Welfare Service who will continue to support and guide schools with this priority.

2.48 Secondary Attendance (Verified data)

2.49 Torfaen Secondary Attendance 3 year trend

The overall attendance across secondary schools during 2017/18 has increased by 0.3% to 94%. Torfaen is therefore now ranked 9th in Wales compared to 16th in 2016/17, although below the Wales average by 0.2% (Wales av.6.2%). (Appendix 5)



2.50 4 schools have increased their attendance over the past 3 years and their attendance from the previous year– Abersychan, Cwmbran High, St. Alban's and Gwynllyw. (Appendix 5).

2.51 West Monmouth School's attendance has declined over the past 3 years.

2.52 Torfaen Primary Bench Mark quartile (BMQ) Data 2017/18

BMQ 1	BMQ 2	BMQ 3	BMQ 4
Abersychan	St. Alban's	Croesyceiliog	West Monmouth
Cwmbran High	Y G Gwynllyw		

2.53 BMQ 3 year trend

2.54 West Monmouth School has declined from BMQ 3 to BMQ 4. (Appendix 6)

2.55 Croesyceiliog has improved from BMQ 4 to BMQ 3.

2.56 St. Alban's has improved from BMQ 4 to BMQ 2.
Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw has improved from BMQ 3 to BMQ 2.

2.57 2 schools have improved from BMQ 4 to BMQ 1 – Abersychan and Cwmbran High School.

This is due to:

- strong commitment and drive for improving attendance
- clear protocols within their schools
- effective collaboration between schools and the EWS.
- consistent use of resources within the 'STRIVE FOR 95+' strategy

2.58 These schools will be encouraged to share their good practice across all secondary schools.

2.59 **Attendance Targets 2017/18**

2.60 Only 2 schools exceeded their attendance target – Abersychan (0.2%) and Cwmbran High School (0.3%). (Appendix 8)

2.61 This meant that Torfaen was below its overall attendance target by 1%.

2.62 **Attendance and performance 2017/18**

2.63 When comparing the attendance and performance data for the academic year 2017/18, there is no correlation between the schools who have lower attendance and lower pupil performance. An example of this is at West Monmouth School, whose attendance has declined but their Key Stage 3 and 4 performance improved.

2.64 **Persistent Absenteeism**

2.65 Torfaen's persistent absenteeism has increased by 1.2% to 5.6% over the past 3 years. This a priority for the Education Welfare Service who will continue to support and guide schools with this priority.

2.66 **EOTAS (Educated other than at School)**

2.67 EOTAS pupils receive education outside of a maintained Local Authority School, which involves education provision commissioned and funded by Torfaen Local Authority for pupils who are Electively Home Educated and do not access education provision from Torfaen. (Appendix 9).

2.68 Each year Torfaen completes the Welsh Government EOTAS census. The 2018 Census showed that there were 2,188 pupils identified accessing EOTAS provisions across Wales. Of these, 77 pupils were from Torfaen. This is 3.5% of the EOTAS population in Wales. In Wales 3.4 out of 1,000 pupils received their main education other than at school. The rate in Torfaen is 2.7%. The majority of pupil's access Torfaen's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and a small number of pupils attend specialist provision out of authority.

2.69 In addition to this, there were 67 Electively Home Educated (EHE) pupils in Torfaen (2016/17 academic year data) and 1,964 across Wales. The Wales data shows a year on year increase in EHE since 2012/13, which is in line with what we have seen in Torfaen. This is a rate of 5.5 per 100% in Torfaen with the all wales rate being 5.6% the rate has increased in 21/22 all local authorities in 2017/18.

2.70 **Torfaen EOTAS 3 year data**

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Elective Home Education	67	89	91

Tuition from PRU	9	8	15
PRU placements (maximum 30)	18	30	24
New Inn group for pupils with Anxiety (10 places)	6	10	8
Managed Moves	4	0	1
Total	104	137	139

2.71 Elective Home Education

2.72 Over the past 3 years the number of Electively Home Educated (EHE) pupils in Torfaen has increased by 35.8%. 15% of pupil's home educated in 2017/18 had never been on a Torfaen school roll. During 16/17 and 17/18 there were more girls electively home educated than boys.

2.73 During 2017/18 we had 24 pupils taken off school roll which is a slight decrease of 1 pupil in comparison to 2016/17. We also had 12 pupils go back into school during the year with a further 2 transition back into school later in September 2018.

2.74 The main reason that parents have chosen to home educate remains parental choice. This includes religious/cultural beliefs and educational philosophy. During 2017/18 we saw a rise in pupils with anxiety being home educated. Parents also chose to home educate because their preferred school place was refused. There has also been a rise in pupils with additional learning needs being home educated.

2.75 Where parents have chosen to Electively Home Educate we work in conjunction with other agencies involved with pupils. They can include: The Gwent Missing Children's Project, Social Care and Families First. In these instances, we work as part of the family plan to give advice and support work, jointly with families to ensure appropriate education provision is in place.

2.76 Croesyceiliog and Abersychan Comprehensive schools had the most pupils taken off roll to be Home Educated over the last 4 years. Blaenavon Primary had the highest number of primary pupils taken off roll. Overall, the Abersychan cluster has had the most pupils taken off roll since 2014/15.

2.77 EOTAS provision provided by Torfaen Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

2.78 The Pupil Referral Unit is Torfaen's registered EOTAS provision, which provides education for pupils in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a short term provision which provides specialist support, interventions and assessments for pupils. Following the interventions pupils may return to their school or move to longer term specialist provision.

2.79 Placements at the PRU are awarded by Torfaen's Additional Learning Needs panel. Where schools have assessed that a pupil may require services provided by the PRU they follow the PRU admissions process. The school that they are currently on roll with remains responsible for the pupil's planning in conjunction with the PRU.

2.80 Placements at the main pupil referral unit site based at Ty Glyn, fluctuate year on year. During 2017/18, 20 new pupils were awarded placements. The majority of pupils referred by schools are in Key Stage 4 and have received multiple fixed term exclusions, prior to receiving a PRU placement. Pupils had also been in receipt of a number of school and local authority services e.g. Outreach support prior to admission. The number of exclusions issued by the PRU has also decreased over a 3 year period by 40%. The PRU issue exclusions rarely and for the maximum of 1 day, which is in line with Torfaen's core exclusion principles.

2.81 Tuition is provided for those pupils of statutory school age who are unable to access their mainstream school due to medical or psychological reasons. Tuition is short term and the pupils' returns to their main education provision when they are able to or move on to a specialist provision. The 3 year data shows an increase in the number of pupils receiving tuition by 87.5%. Referrals for tuition are all supported by medical advice. The main reason for referrals for tuition is for pupils with anxiety and mental health issues. Some pupils are taught 1-1 with others in small group settings.

2.82 **Managed Moves**

2.83 A managed move is a voluntary agreement between schools, parents/carers and pupils, for a pupil to change school under a controlled plan. Managed moves can be used as a strategy to avoid exclusion. An example would be, where relationships have broken down with a particular school and it is felt that a fresh start at a new school would be beneficial. The managed move process is led by schools and involves school to school working with the school the pupil is on roll at, leading the move. Torfaen have had very few managed moves during the last 4 academic years.

2.84 **Pupils Registered out of Year**

Torfaen have very few pupils registered out of their year group. In 2017/18, there were 3 pupils. It is the head teacher and governing body's decision to allow a pupil to be admitted into a year group that is different to their chronological age. This can be agreed where parents seek places outside their normal age group for gifted and talented children, or those who have experienced problems or missed part of a year, often due to ill health or missed schooling. Pupils registered out of their year group can cause difficulties at key points e.g. primary/secondary transition and sitting of public examinations.

3. **Discussion**

3.1 Torfaen Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Team work in partnership with our schools to develop and co-construct policy and practise for meeting the needs of pupils who have ALN. We have been developing schools and local authority systems for meeting the needs of learners with Social Emotional and Behavioural difficulties by developing a graduated response so there is a continuum of provision at school level and local authority level. Many schools are developing their internal provisions and interventions to better support pupils with social emotional and behavioural needs which enables pupils to receive a wider range of targeted interventions and support within their home school.

3.2 Our assessment centre pilot 'Pont Fach' hosted at Maendy Primary School has continued to offer short term assessment placements for primary pupils as part of their education provision. Pupils identified by the Outreach Service access the centre for an episode of weekly sessions aimed at assessment in a controlled environment, sharing approaches between outreach staff and school staff, and contributing to summative assessments to inform longer term education planning for pupils.

3.3 The Pupil Referral Unit has completed training with the Gwent Attachment Service. With staff receiving training and working with clinical leads to plan support for pupils who have

experience trauma and have attachment difficulties.

- 3.4 The local authority has a rigorous process to monitor exclusions where each exclusion is monitored and local authority officers provide advice and guidance to schools for individual pupils. Exclusions are analysed on a monthly basis and the information is presented to schools and management team. We have half termly meetings involving our Educational Psychology Service, Outreach and PRU which discusses the exclusion data and pupils/schools with high numbers of exclusion. We also discuss planning and support for individual pupils, schools and identify any training that is required. We can then coordinate services from the local authority to support schools.
- 3.5 The work plan of the Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist (SSEP) is developed in line with schools requiring support to reduce their exclusions and develop internal strategies and support systems. In 2017/18, all schools undertaking targeted support from the SSEP reduced their exclusions. In 2018/19, West Monmouth and Croesyceiliog are schools receiving targeted support with all other secondary schools receiving monitoring support, following the increase in secondary exclusions in 2017/18.
- 3.6 All schools have been offered the local authority's training and support programme on meeting the needs of pupils who have social and emotional and behavioural difficulties. All secondary schools have attended and 24/26 primary schools. The local authority's core behaviour management programme was devised with secondary schools in 2012/13 and made available to all Primary Schools from 2015 and delivery is on-going. The Authority has also taken steps to embed the approach in schools, by ensuring that school partners have had the opportunity to become familiar with the programme, so that there is a shared, evidence-based understanding of how the authority works with the most challenging students (e.g. governors, central services and community partners). In 2016/17 and 2017/18 the 5 South East Wales Authorities were offered the opportunity to share the learning from the programme in two Continued Professional Development (CPD) courses in conjunction with the training offer as part of the regional Looked After Children's strategy.
- 3.7 Evaluation of the impact of the targeted interventions in 2017/18 shows each school reduced the average number of exclusions in the schools, where exclusions were identified as an issue by:
- reductions of 100% ,64.8% and 41% in the targeted primary schools
 - 2 target secondary school have seen a 36.7% reduction in exclusion and the other 30.6%
 - Termly monitoring reports for all secondary schools and target primary schools are produced by the Senior Specialist Educational psychologist which discuss factors impacting on exclusions and advice/support strategies.
- 3.8 As a result of the evaluation of targeted school support, Torfaen is developing good practise core principles that we believe schools should take account of when considering their own policies and procedures which involve the use of Fixed Term Exclusions. This builds upon the training and guidance provided by Welsh Government and promotes consistency across Torfaen. This is part of the 2018/19 training and school support programme.
- 3.9 Some examples are:
- Abersychan Secondary school reduced their Fixed Term exclusions by 30.6% in 2017/18. Feedback from the school shows the local authority and school worked together closely to improve their systems for planning and supporting students with significant Behavior Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) by modifying and embedding school based systems and support interventions for pupils that prevent

exclusions.

- Cwmbran High School reduced the number of exclusions by 36.6% by working with the Senior Specialist Educational Psychologist (SSEP) on the principle that: the length of exclusion doesn't make a difference to subsequent pupil behavior and that schools don't need to demonstrate to other students that they are taking a hard line by giving very long exclusions, as research shows that other students are not motivated by the same needs and are therefore unlikely to engage in extreme behaviors.
- Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw – set up a wellbeing Centre for some pupils causing concern in Y8 that were at risk of exclusion.
- Nant Celyn Primary School reduced their exclusions by 100%. They have developed internal systems and a provision that pupils can access to receive support and intervention to manage their behaviors by providing alternatives that prevent the need to exclude.

3.10 Under current law, Local Authorities have limited duties and powers in relation to Home Education and monitoring the quality of education provided. In line with recommendations of the Estyn Thematic Review of Home Education 2016 and WG guidance, Torfaen keep a register of pupils who we are made aware, are home educated. We contact families regularly to offer support, advice and guidance and ask for details of provision, however parents do not legally have to engage with us or provide us with information. Many of our parents do engage with us, particularly when they first decide to home educate and they agree to meet with us or provide information when requested. We aim to continue to build a supporting relationship with parents so they feel they can contact us, when they need support.

3.11 Under Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996, local authorities can intervene if we have evidence that parents are not providing a suitable education. We always aim to work with parents who choose to home educate to support them to develop provision if their wish remains to home educate or we can support them with inclusion to a school also.

3.12 **Attendance**

Research from evidence indicates clearly that the more regularly a child attends school, the more they will learn and achieve. Torfaen Education recognises this and is committed to providing all learners with the best possible education and ensuring that they achieve to the best of their ability.

3.13 Torfaen launched the 'STRIVE FOR 95+' attendance tool in January 2018, to closely monitor and address patterns of school non - attendance. All schools received a 'STRIVE FOR 95+' pack which included all the resources required to implement the strategy successfully.

3.14 The strategy:

- investigates the reasons behind the attendance figures for both Primary and Secondary Attendance in Torfaen
- identifies and celebrates examples of good practice
- identifies issues and concerns
- recommends preventative measures for attendance and support to schools for the upcoming year

3.15 **Concerns**

3.16 There are 7 primary schools that are showing areas of concern regarding their attendance when looking at the following data (Appendix 9), based on:

- Actual attendance for 2017/18
- Difference from agreed target
- 3 year trend
- BMQ
- 1 year trajectory

- 3.17 They are: Blaenavon, Blenheim, Nant Celyn, Llantarnam, Greenmeadow, Penygarn and Ysgol Bryn Onnen. These schools will receive 3 Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits per half term apart from Penygarn, which will receive 1 day a week visit from the Senior EWO. This will be monitored on a half monthly basis and is adaptive according to need. These have also been encouraged to visit Our Lady of the Angels, St. David's and Ysgol Gymraeg Cwmbran to view best practice.
- 3.18 There is one secondary school specifically showing areas of concern regarding its overall attendance when looking at the above data.
- 3.19 This school is West Monmouth. They will receive 22.5 hrs a week EWO support (with additional Senior EWO support for the Autumn Term). The school has been issued with a pre-warning notice regarding their attendance during the Spring Term 2017/18, which will be reviewed in the Autumn Term. West Monmouth School has visited Abersychan to investigate strategies, consistent practices and the commitment and drive that brought about the improvement in their attendance.
- 3.20 All EWOs will be located at secondary schools as their main base. This is to ensure that they can monitor and support their schools appropriately and in a timely manner.

4. Implications

- 4.1 Following a rise in fixed term Secondary exclusions in 2017/18 the targeted support for the 2018/19 academic year will focus on developing systems and provision in secondary schools to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions. This will include developing the core principles and targeting training for all schools, focusing on embedding the work completed in 2017/18, to ensure those schools who reduced their exclusions in 2017/18 continue to do so.
- 4.2 The work of the School to School group will focus on development of provision at school and local authority level. Alongside the sharing of practise within Torfaen and regionally to support pupils with Social Emotional and Behavioural difficulties, reducing exclusions and enabling Torfaen students to remain in education provision within Torfaen.
- 4.3 Working in conjunction with the Education Achievement Service and Health services we are developing the training available to schools especially in relation to support for students with mental health difficulties working in conjunction with the Gwent Attachment Service, CAMHS in Reach project and Public Health Wales with the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) agenda.
- 4.4 The local authority in conjunction with our ALN transformation lead and colleagues from the other South East Wales Authorities will continue to plan and implement the elements of the new ALN Act, in preparation for September 2021.
- 4.5 *Welsh Government will be releasing new guidance in relation to Elective Home Education in the Spring Term. We will review our current polices and practise in relation to this and continue monitoring the numbers closely.*

- 4.6 To further improve Torfaen's Schools attendance, the priorities for 2018/19 are:
- Celebrate improvements with all schools within the local authority
 - Share good practice across the local authority
 - Ensure consistent practice within the Education Welfare Service (EWS), s e.g.as per the EWO flow chart
 - Ensure consistent support and guidance given to schools by the EWS e.g. completion of the Record Of Consultations (ROC) by schools, activities, etc.
 - Monitor all schools attendance appropriately on a monthly basis and act in a timely manner
 - EWOs to support schools in setting appropriate local attendance targets based (using individual school data and evidence)
 - Ensure that schools are applying the correct resources within the strategy
 - Ensure that schools are applying the correct attendance codes within SIMS??
 - Ensure additional support and guidance to be given to the schools that have been identified as a cause for concerns regarding their attendance
 - Ensure that attendance continues to be an agenda item in Intervention Panel Meetings, EIB Meetings and SEWC Schools Causing Concern particularly where there are concerns regarding individual school attendance.
- 4.7 Where the pace of improvement is insufficient (in reducing exclusions and raising attendance) in consultation with the schools, there will be a consideration of issuing a pre-warning notice (followed by a warning notice if required).

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The majority of pupils remain in education in Torfaen but may access other support or EOTAS provisions to meet their specific educational needs.
- 5.2 From regular analyses of exclusion data, both within schools and within the Local Authority, we know that:
- The majority of exclusions are accounted for by a small minority of students in each school.
 - These students tend to have repeat exclusions
 - Nearly all of these students have experienced a large number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and often represent the most vulnerable and troubled children in the authority.
- 5.3 There is a recognition that for these students, exclusion is not an effective method of changing their behaviour.
- 5.4 The training programme has reduced the average number of exclusions in the schools accessing it. With all primary schools and the 2 target secondary schools seeing a reduction in exclusions in 2017/18.
- 5.5 School to school work has enabled school partners (Crownbridge and PRU outreach) to support the needs of many children with significant behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, helping them to maintain their placements in mainstream education.
- 5.6 The new attendance strategy 'STRIVE FOR 95+' has been implemented. All schools are adhering to the strategy, however, there are inconsistencies in how some schools are

applying the resources e.g. letters sent to families in a timely manner, etc.

- 5.7 There are also inconsistencies, in practice, within the Education Welfare Service. This is being addressed in team meetings and there will be a full day's training scheduled in early September to reinforce messages and protocols within the strategy. The Senior Education Welfare Officer will be leading the training.
- 5.8 At this point in time, it can be evidenced that overall, the strategy is having a positive effect on Torfaen secondary schools attendance. In 2017/18, this has improved by 0.3% Torfaen's. Torfaen is ranked 9th in Wales compared to 16th in 2016/17 and is below the Wales average by 0.2% (Wales's av.6.2%).
- 5.9 It is too early to judge the impact of the strategy on Torfaen's primary schools attendance as there is no comparative data available as yet and local data is unverified.

6. Scrutiny activity

6.1 The Committee should scrutinise and make recommendations on:

- The Council's position on exclusions, attendance and EOTAS including the support provided to schools to adopt the Council's policies aimed at addressing these issues;
- Assess current levels of absence and exclusions and the impact on performance associated;
- Determine how effective schools are in ensuring pupils are positively engaged in education;
- Offer views on whether the proposed actions will deliver reductions in exclusions and EOTAS and/ or improvements in attendance as well as contributing to improvement in pupil attainment

Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 – 3 Year Exclusion Analysis</p> <p>Appendix 2 – 8 Year Exclusion Analysis</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Number of Pupils Excluded Analysis</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Fixed Term Exclusions</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Attendance</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Attendance 3 year trend</p> <p>Appendix 7 – EOTAS Statistical Release</p> <p>Appendix 8 – Attendance Targets</p> <p>Appendix 9 – Attendance Summary</p>
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Background Papers	<p>Note: Members of the public are entitled, under the Local Government Act 1972, to inspect background papers to reports. The following is a list of the background papers used in the production of this report.</p>
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<p>For a copy of the background papers or for further information about this report, please telephone: Sharon Davies – Head of Learning</p>
