

# **Midlothian school attendance rates higher than national average but remain lower than pre Covid**

**School attendance rates in Midlothian are higher than the national average but remain lower than they were pre Covid, according to the latest figures published.**

A meeting of Midlothian Council's cabinet this week heard that in secondary schools the attendance rate last year was over 93 per cent, nearly a full one per cent above the national average.

Primary schools however remain around the same as the national average with just over 87 per cent of pupils in attendance.

A two week snapshot of attendance at schools across the county in February showed an overall rate of 91.5 per cent which left the county with the 13th highest rate out of Scotland's 32 local authorities.

The highest attendance during the two weeks was recorded by East Dunbartonshire at 93.8 per cent, the lowest was Fife at just 89 per cent.

Midlothian's education chief operating officer Michelle Strong told the cabinet meeting: "Attendance rates is a national concern with school attendance across Scotland not returning

to pre Covid figures. It is a complex and difficult area.”

She said the education service had run a number of pilot projects and invested in the issue and while improvements were being made they were not seeing the results as quickly as they would have liked.

Councillor Ellen Scott, the cabinet spokesperson for education said: “It is a very complex issue. Because of Covid there is a changing attitude by parents and the pupils.

“There was a sort of social contract before and that seems to have diminished and the importance of going to school seems to have fallen by the wayside.

“And then you have poverty and mental health issues being experienced by lots of our children. But there are green shoots of hope. We want improvement, we are focused on it and we want our children back in school.

“Hopefully over the next few years as Covid diminishes we will see a change as our children realise going to school is the best thing they can do.”

By Marie Sharp, Local Democracy Reporter