

# **School attendance across East Lothian almost at pre Covid rates**

**School attendance across East Lothian has almost returned to pre Covid rates with nearly 93% of pupils back in the classroom, a new report reveals.**

The latest figures for attendance across the county shows the percentage of youngsters in school is continuing to rise with additional support being provided to parents and families.

Following lockdowns during the pandemic education bosses saw drops in the number of pupils attending classes with more than one in ten absent.

However a report due to go before the council's education and children's services committee this week reveals most recent numbers show 92.2% of children are attending school, only slightly before the 2019 figures of 93%.

The report acknowledges attendance issues at school are a 'national concern' particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic.

It says: "The reasons for this are multi-faceted but include the impact of poverty and increased anxiety amongst the school aged population."

The report sets out a variety of strategies used by schools in East Lothian to encourage youngsters into the classroom by adopting a "whole school nurturing approach and more

targeted interventions including breakfast clubs, walking buses and bespoke timetabling”.

The number of children with additional support needs attending classes has also risen but remains below the average for all students with 89.5% attendance rates although it is up from 85.3%.

The lowest attendance rate remains among pupils who qualify for free school meals with only 85.8% at school.

The council has introduced Child Planning Framework–Locality Teams (CPF-LTs) who work with children and young people experiencing degrees of difficulty with attending school using a range of multi agency solutions.

It also has Families Together East Lothian (FTEL) providing outreach support which includes promoting effective bedtime and morning routines, managing a household and linking in with the school to support conversations with families and young people.

And its Equity & Inclusion Education Outreach Service, established six months ago provides additional support and options for those struggling to cope in school including for reasons of mental or physical illness.

The report which will go before the committee for noting adds that persistent absenteeism in pupils is lower in East Lothian than the national average and continues to reduce in numbers as the various support projects continue to work with the school community.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter