
VALE OF LEVEN ACADEMY

ATTENDANCE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT



CONTEXT

- 32.5% FME
- 54% SIMD 1-2
- 6% Care Experienced
- 51 care experienced pupils - 34 of those are FME
- 61% ASN
- 4.6% Young Carers

BACKGROUND

- Prior to this research project, average student attendance was 87.8%.
- Historically, we have had the poorest attendance in our local authority

BACKGROUND

- Our school strives to ensure that students can access pathways that lead to a positive career.
- Improving attendance is a key pillar of our approach to student welfare.
- Research finds that students who perform better at the end of primary and secondary school missed fewer days than those who didn't perform as well.

CHALLENGES

- An area of multiple deprivation
- Generational and community attitude towards school and education
- Post Covid attitude towards attendance
- Poor attendance at primary – difficult to break down barriers in secondary school
- Cultural patterns – Friday absences, taking time off prior to holidays
- Partner agencies struggling to support due to stress on their own resources

RESEARCH FOCUS

- Our team consisted of DHTs, PTs, class teachers and our attainment advisor
- Our focus was an S3 mixed gender cohort, with attendance between 80% & 90%
 - S3 have the poorest overall attendance
 - Our target group comprised 51 students.
 - 32 were female and 19 male.
 - 41% had an additional support need
 - 2% were care experienced.
 - 37% were entitled to free school meals.

RESEARCH FOCUS

- Our overarching intention was simply to identify what poorly attending students, and their parents, considered to be the most significant barriers to attending school.
- We utilised an Ishikawa Cause and Effect (fishbone) diagram to support these conversations, which were led by five teachers, who each spoke with approximately ten students.
- Additionally, one teacher also spoke directly with a cross section of 18 parents of these students.

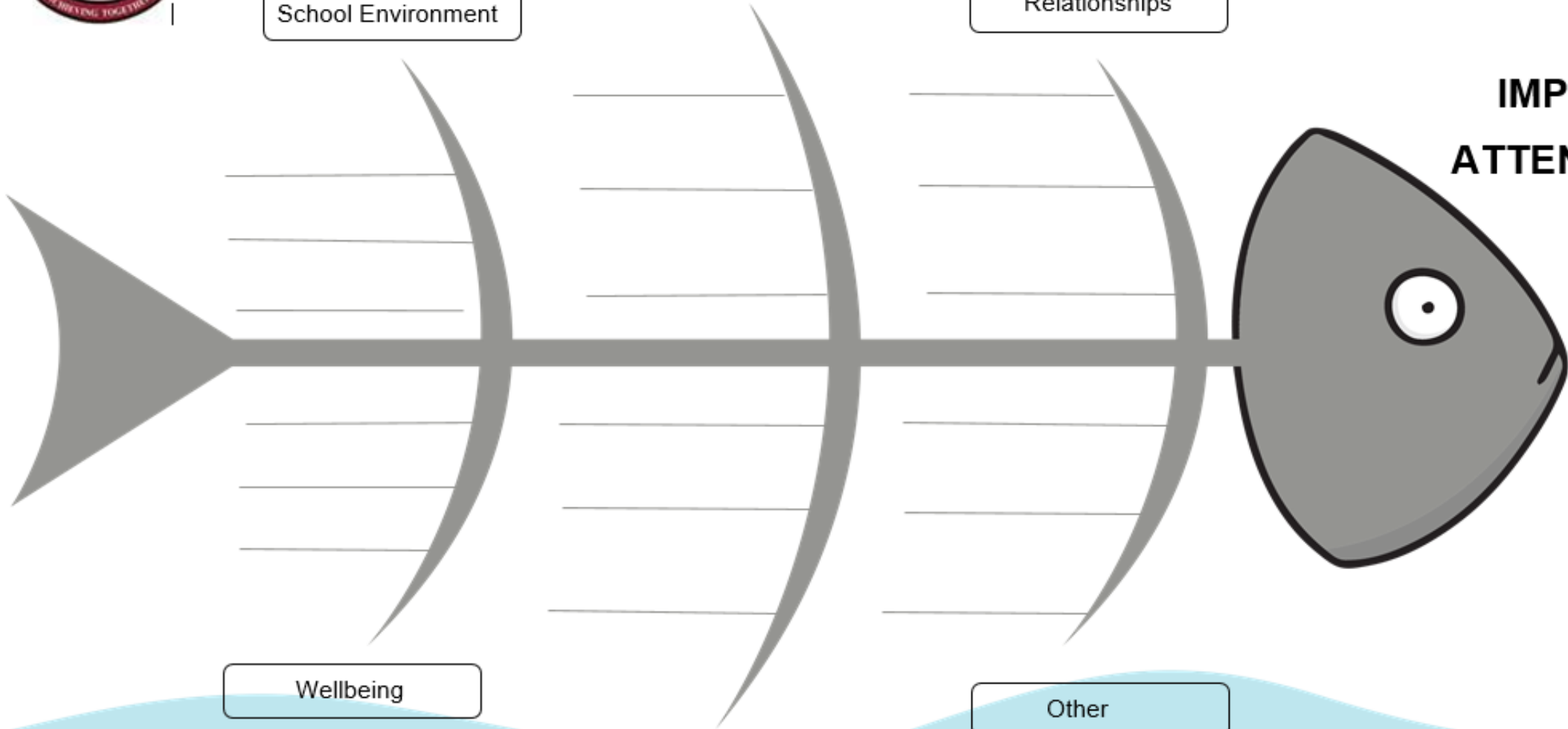


School Environment

Family/Home

Relationships

**IMPROVE
ATTENDANCE**



Wellbeing

Other

Curriculum

STUDENT AND PARENT FOCUS GROUPS

- Students and parents were led through each step of the Ishikawa methodology as follows:
 - Discussion of the identified problem: low attendance
 - Consideration of broad 'cause' categories
 - Brainstorming of potential specific causes
 - Delving deeper and discussing whether these causes applied specifically to particular students
 - Agreement of root cause(s) for individual's low attendance
 - Discussing potential solutions

METHODS

- Phone interviews were undertaken with parents
- Student focus groups were carried out by our class teachers and the two Principal Teachers who were involved
- All findings were anonymised – purpose was learning

METHODS

- Data was broadly qualitative and was organised under the following headings:
 - Relationships
 - School Environment
 - Curriculum
 - Family/Home
 - Wellbeing
 - Money/ Financial

RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Data was mostly qualitative and was gathered and scrutinised by our Principal Teachers
- Data was organised and presented in a parental feedback form and a student driver diagram
- Some of the reasons given by parents and students were very similar
- Some reasons (late-coming, ethos, period products) had very simple, practical solutions
- Some were more challenging (timetabling/ relationships)

PARENTAL FEEDBACK

The main issues highlighted by parents in curriculum were:-

- Timetabling - some days a particular heavy with literacy based subjects.
- Teaching styles - a lot of copying from written text on a board.
- Lead up to end of term - Do not see point coming in last week as child reports they 'aren't doing anything'
- Certain subjects put students off.
- Lack of motivation.
- Gaps in learning - recovery learning.
- Struggles with the levels of work expected.

The main issues highlighted by parents in relationships were:-

- Bullying - Not dealt with effectively in their opinion.
- Peer relationships - falling out with friends.
- Graffiti - toilet walls.
- Friend dependent - if friend does not attend nor will they.
- Teachers not being 'dynamic' enough.
- Not getting on with certain teachers.

Comments from other areas included:-

- Their own views of the school from the past - changing/challenging attitudes.
- Split custody - not always aware of any potential issues.
- Latecoming - Parent works nightshift etc...
- Seating in class - Not liking where they sit.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Primary Drivers

Relationships

- Bullying
- Peer relationships / Fallouts
- Poor teacher relationships

Curriculum

- Teaching styles not engaging students
- lack of motivation.
- Subject choices and timetabling are demotivating students.

Wellbeing

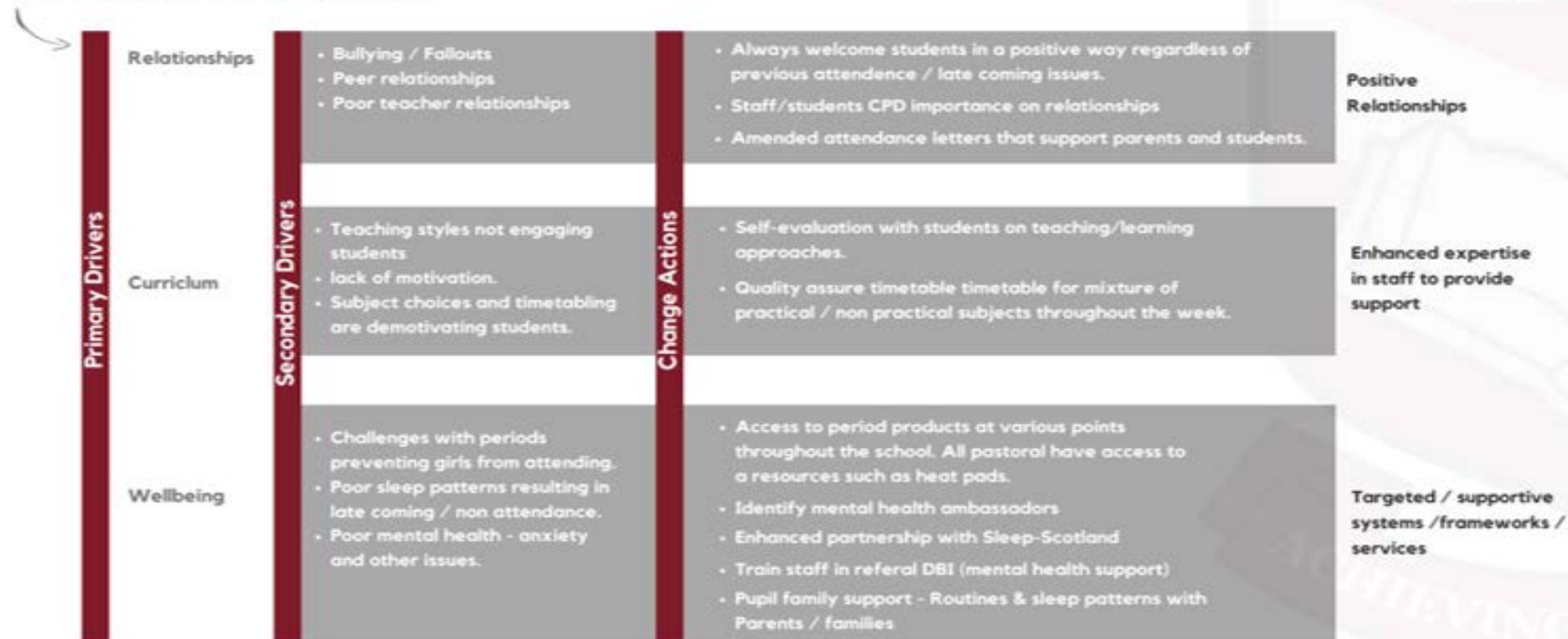
- Challenges with periods preventing girls from attending.
- Poor sleep patterns resulting in late coming / non attendance.
- Poor mental health - anxiety and other issues.

Secondary Drivers

IMPLICATIONS

- The following Driver Diagram highlights the change actions and their justification from the work that we have undertaken so far:

our aim is to: increase overall attendance



REVIEW

- 36 out of the 51 students have improved their attendance
- To allow time for implementation of the identified change actions, progress will be reviewed in November 2024.
- Initial impact:
 - 2023 - best attendance in LA
 - 2024 - second best in LA
- Improving attendance has been our priority now for a number of years and will continue to be.

CHALLENGES

- How to immediately improve attendance of students involved
- Ongoing communication with parents and pupils required around attendance
- Resources to support better attendance
- Implementing universal strategies
- Attendance is a challenge Nationally



Questions