

Pupil Attendance Policy

Principles

Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school and establish positive life habits necessary for future success. They also minimise the risks of pupils conducting anti-social behaviour or becoming victims or perpetrators of crime or abuse. Children's social skills are also enhanced by regular attendance.

Aims:

- To share the responsibility for promoting school attendance amongst everyone in the school and the broader school community;
- To develop and implement an effective attendance policy that touches all aspects of a school's life, and relates directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum – staff particularly strive:
 - i. to encourage all pupils to reach their true potential and eventually become independent learners who value learning with and from others, i.e. have a positive attitude to life-long learning;
 - ii. to value application, perseverance, initiative and independence of thought and action, as well as co-operative endeavours.
- This attendance policy and its implementation should encourage some pupils to attend school more regularly by the implementation of specific measures, e.g.
 - i. registering pupils accurately and efficiently;
 - ii. setting attendance targets for individual pupils and year groups;
 - iii. contacting parents the same day when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised;
 - iv. regularly monitoring pupil attendance and punctuality;
 - v. reporting school attendance statistics to parents, LA as appropriate.
- To build up cost-effective networking and joint training involving groups of schools or different professional groups regarding attendance;
- To monitor and evaluate this policy and its implementation by, amongst other means, rigorously collecting and analysing data about attendance to check our progress against measurable outcomes, e.g. National and LA-level.

Roles & Responsibilities

Parents

All children of compulsory school age (5-16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. If a child is registered at school, parents have the primary statutory

responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. In addition to statutory obligations parents have all signed the Home-School agreement – a section of which describes the agreed responsibilities of the parents: The following extract is taken from the Home-School Agreement.

The Parents' Responsibilities

To help fulfil their important role in their child's education, and to be as informed as possible in any communications or discussions with teachers, parents are requested and encouraged, to the extent feasible:

- to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- to notify the school if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons;
- to work with the school and education welfare service to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence;
- to ensure they obtain 'leave of absence' for their child if required during term time.

To discharge their agreed responsibilities parents should always:

- encourage good attendance making sure that their child goes to school regularly and arrives on time;
- take an interest in their child's school work;
- make sure their child understands that the parents do not approve of absence from school;
- support the school in its efforts to control inappropriate behaviour;
- inform the school on the first day of non-attendance;
- co-operate with the school staff and the Educational Social Worker (ESW) to make sure their child overcomes his or her attendance problems and gets a proper education;
- discuss planned absences with the school and apply for permission well in advance, e.g. a family holiday, a wedding or other special occasions, etc. Parents should not normally:
 - i. expect the school to agree to shopping trips during school hours;
 - ii. take their own family holidays outside of the school holidays;
 - iii. take their own family holidays during test time;

Pupils

- i. Pupils are actively encouraged to attend school regularly and to arrive punctually at school and at the start of lessons after break;
- ii. Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, racism, etc.

- iii. Pupils should use their best endeavours to pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher and to pass school correspondence to their parents;

LA & Educational Welfare Service (EWS)

LAs need to co-operate about any attendance problems, and where many children attend school in neighbouring authority areas they should have standing arrangements for co-ordination to prevent truancy. Early warning of attendance problems will normally be to the LA where the pupil attends school, but any necessary legal action is the responsibility of the LA where the child lives.

It is the responsibility of the LA to ensure that parents meet their statutory responsibilities either by registering the child at a school or by making other effective educational arrangements. If a child is registered as a pupil at a particular school, that school must give permission for a child to be absent. If a child does not go to the school at which he or she is registered, the relevant LA can take legal action against the parents. LAs' legal powers to enforce attendance are:

- **School Attendance Orders** – these enforce the parents' responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive suitable education;

LA's are responsible, by law for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend their school regularly. Most LA's employ ESWs (Education Social Workers) to monitor school attendance and to help parents meet their responsibilities.

Each school in the LA has a named ESW responsible for the attendance of all the pupils in the school - some are actually based in schools. Where a child lives in a neighbouring LA, follow-up action will require co-operative working with the relevant ESW. Any necessary legal action is the responsibility of the LA where the child is domicile.

ESWs should check registers regularly to ensure that they are being completed in accordance with the school's policy and to identify any patterns of absence which have not already been notified. The ESW promptly follows up incidents where the staff have identified a possible attendance problem.

ESWs should work closely with schools and families to resolve attendance issues, arranging home visits where necessary. The key to success is an effective working relationship between schools and the ESW including:

- shared policies and operational practices between the ESW and the schools (see below);
- clearly defined roles of school staff and ESWs;

- how much time the ESW will devote to the school;
- expectation of the quality of ESW service;
- arrangements for referral, regular review, monitoring and evaluation;
- procedures for resolving enquiries.

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is legally responsible for many aspects of school management including the attendance register and so it is registered with the Data Protection Registrar under the Data Protection Act 1998. However, the Head Teacher manages the day-to-day running of the school and in so doing takes responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of this policy.

The Head Teacher

Head Teachers are required to tell the LA if a pupil fails to attend regularly or has been absent for a continuous period of ten days and the absence is treated as unauthorised. Head Teachers can, of course, notify the LA earlier if there are areas of concern. The initial contact with the LA will be made with the EWO. Normally the school itself will have made and recorded efforts to address the non-attendance through:

- action by the class teacher as part of their day-to-day duties;
- involvement of others within the school, e.g. Head Teacher
- contact with parents.

Referral to the EWO would normally take place if:

- a pattern of irregular attendance or lateness is either continuing or worsening;
- parents do not accept their responsibilities for ensuring the child attends school, and are refusing to discuss ways of improving attendance with the school;
- condoned, unjustified absence is increasingly a problem;
- the parents ask for excessive authorised absence.

Head Teachers are also required to maintain two registers:

- an admission register (known as the school roll) which contains a list of all pupils at the school;
- an attendance register (unless all pupils are boarders) for all pupils of compulsory school age on the admission register. This must be taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Similarly, the school keeps a register of pupils present on the school site during lunch time, this is needed in the event of an emergency to show which pupils need to be accounted for.

Head Teachers should ensure that a clear policy on attendance is in place, which is known to staff, pupils and parents. The positive link with parents can be strengthened if the arrangements for notifying absence and the school's policy towards absence (authorised and unauthorised) is regularly publicised.

Class Teacher

Class teachers must enforce this policy strictly. If a pupil is absent without explanation when the register is called, school staff should contact the parents the same day wherever possible. The absence should also be followed up with the parent to ensure that a written note is received explaining the absence. Where no reply is received, a further letter should be sent warning that unless the absence is explained it will have to be recorded as unauthorised.

When a pupil is missing from class for no apparent reason, the class teacher should immediately inform the school office so that the pupil's absence can be further investigated. Class teachers can also contribute to the reduction of unauthorised absence by delivering interesting and engaging lessons and insisting on punctuality for themselves, colleagues and pupils.

Initiatives to Improve Attendance Rates

There are many reasons why pupils miss school without permission. As such, there is no one solution to the problem of absenteeism. For example setting reward schemes, such as certificates, school trips and breakfast clubs. It is important that wherever possible the school works alongside the LA in supporting and implementing attendance initiatives which:

- help children develop the habit of regular attendance;
- show parents clearly that unjustified absence will be recorded and challenged;
- minimise problems in KS1 by helping pupils transferring from nursery schools.

Improving Attendance

The school has considered initiatives that are most appropriate and always takes into account a pupil's individual circumstances, e.g. setting reward schemes such as certificates, for 100% attendance or effort to attend. Other helpful initiatives include:

- A member of staff visiting each class during registration time to record, absences and lateness;
- If no reason is known for an absence parents will be contacted on the first day either by the staff member or via the automated text messaging service Call Parents;
- A record is kept of all pupils who are late or absent

- The Head Teacher has made a concerted effort to encourage a good working relationship with parents by regularly publicising the arrangements for notifying absence and the school's policy towards authorised absence in the home-school agreement.

Keeping the Register

At Ysgol Melyd we take attendance on the SIMS database system. Information from this database is available to the LA at all times. On SIMS an attendance code must be inputted for each pupil at morning and afternoon registration. If the pupil is absent, the register **must** clearly differentiate between whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised by the school.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school - this includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided, e.g. ill health.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school - this includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

Pupils Present At Registration

An oblique stroke (forward) records a pupil's personal presence at morning registration, with a backward stroke being used for the afternoon. Pupils who are helping with events on-site should still personally report to their class teacher (if at all possible) to be registered no matter how brief their presence may be.

Register Codes:

The school records attendance as follows:-

Present at Registration	/ \
Approved educational activity - Sporting	P
Approved educational activity – Visits/Field Trips	V
Illness	I
Medical and dental appointments (if absent for whole session)	M
Days of religious observance -	R
Attending interview -	J
Study Leave -	S
Dual Registration involving Pupil Referral Units (PRUs or special schools)	B
Family holidays during term-time (agreed)-	H
Extended holiday (agreed) -	F
Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess) -	G
Exclusion -	E

Special circumstances not covered elsewhere i.e. bereavement/ transport difficulties/family crisis	C
Lateness -	L
Late after register closes	U
Unauthorised absence	O
Partial and enforced closure	Y
School closed to all pupils	#

These codes and the criteria of authorised absence (see Appendix 1) are all recorded on the register. All teacher laptops have access to SIMS, which possesses this information.

Lateness

The school actively discourages late arrival by staff setting a good example and by challenging it whenever it occurs. Class registers are marked by teachers and the number of minutes late is recorded. At the end of each half term, we look at the pupils who are highlighted as late and contact the parents of pupils who are late on a regular basis. Frequent lateness of pupils can provide grounds for prosecution of parents. The school allows the register to be kept open for up to twenty five minutes from the beginning of registration - however in the case of known delays such as bus breakdowns or severe weather, the register may be kept open for longer.

Temporary School Closures

Where a school has to close due to severe weather conditions, fire or other structural damage or for in-service training, no attendance registers are needed.

Deleting Pupils from the Admissions Register

There are strict rules on when schools can delete pupils from their admissions register. Where a school has decided to remove a pupil from their admission roll, they should notify their LA.

If a pupil is to be taken off the admissions register because the child is moving to another area or school, staff should first find out the name and address of the new school and when the pupil will start, confirming this information with the receiving school. School staff should be concerned:

- if the parents do not name the receiving school;
- if a pupil has 'disappeared' from the area without explanation;
- if a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term-time.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The school will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented

throughout the school and staff, pupils and parents should be reminded regularly of its contents.

A nominated governor for Additional Learning Needs has been appointed. Effective monitoring/evaluation of the ALN provision is dependent upon the maintenance of accurate and up-to-date records. The criteria by which the monitoring and evaluation of the ALN provision is undertaken are described below:

Parents:

1. The degree to which the pupils and parents have been consulted during the formation and implementation of relevant policies;
2. Any pertinent feedback from parents;
3. Regular updating of the information pack for parents;
4. The amount of data and information given to parents regarding the attendance rates of their children and their peers.

Pupils:

5. The degree to which the social inclusion targets have been met - these include:
 - pupil achievement, e.g. increase in attendance over time;
 - the numbers of fixed-period and/or permanent exclusions;
6. Routine examination by the Governors of anonymous case studies;
7. Any improvements in the support infrastructure for disruptive and disaffected pupils and those responsible for teaching them;
8. The number, frequency or extent of incidents of poor behaviour in school;
9. The rate of reintegration into mainstream education of pupils who have been out of school;
10. The incidences of bullying;
11. Any pertinent feedback from pupils;

Outside Agencies & LA:

12. The instigation of effective links with LAs' behaviour support plans;
13. The effectiveness of a partnership approach, making full and appropriate use of the experience and expertise of all agencies with relevant skills, e.g. the Education Welfare and Educational Psychology Services, voluntary organisations and the private sector wherever appropriate ;

Independent Reports:

14. Analysis and publication of Estyn reports.

The School's annual report to parents contains a report of the attendance rates and the effectiveness of initiatives and any

amendments made or proposed over the year to our attendance policy.

APPENDIX 1

Categories of Authorised Absence

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

Pupils should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools and EWOs can consult the School Health Service, or the pupil's GP.

Interview for a Place at another School (Including Entrance Examinations)

If the interview takes place and the school is satisfied it is a legitimate activity, absence can be recorded as 'approved educational activity'.

Dual Registration

Where a pupil is dually registered at two institutions, e.g. a mainstream school and a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or Special School, the pupil is registered as attending. A similar situation arises whilst traveller children are travelling - during this time they should enrol with another school. N.B. Distance Learning packs for Traveller children are not acceptable alternatives to attendance at school.

Special Situations and Occasions

The school responds sensitively to special situations or requests to attend events such as weddings and funerals. Situations such as family bereavement, or the child caring for a sick or disabled family member should clearly be recorded as authorised absence.

Public Performances

The Local Authority must licence a pupil aged 5 - 16 to take part in a public performance. Licensed participation should therefore clearly be treated as authorised absence.

Approved Educational Activities Off-Site

The following activities show when the approved educational activity category can be used:

- field trips and educational visits, in this country and overseas;
- participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities;
- pupils receiving part of their tuition off-site at another location while remaining under overall supervision of the home school, i.e. a flexible arrangement short of formal dual registration. This can include special tuition for dyslexic children and sick children being taught at home but remaining on roll.

Family Holidays

Under education law parents may request absence for pupils from school due to a family holiday. It is for schools to determine whether or not they agree to a family holiday during term time. Schools may authorise absence for this purpose for up to 10 school days in any school year - exceptionally, the school may agree absence for more than 10 school days in a school year. The 10 days should not be regarded as the norm or as an entitlement. In considering any request for holiday absence, schools should look at individual circumstances and take account of:

- the age of the pupil;
- the time of year proposed for the trip;
- its nature and the parents' wishes;
- the overall attendance pattern of the pupil;
- the pupil's stage of education and progress.

If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised. If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised. Exceptionally, if a pupil fails to return within 10 school days of the agreed return date the pupil may be deleted from the roll – unless of course the protracted absence is due to a good reason, e.g. illness. If a child is off school for more than 10 days, the school will normally set work for him or her to complete whilst away.

APPENDIX 2

Pupil Exclusion

A pupil excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence should be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school - this includes the period whilst any review or appeal is in progress and must continue until the pupil is removed from the school roll.

"Exclude" means exclude on disciplinary grounds without specifying any degree of seriousness. There are two categories of exclusion: fixed period (suspension) or permanent (expulsion). Pupils may also be excluded from the school premises for the duration of the lunchtime break between the morning and afternoon school sessions.

Exclusion is a serious step which should be used only in response to serious breaches of a school's discipline policy. Exclusion should only be sanctioned after;

- i. a range of alternative strategies to resolve the pupil's disciplinary problems have been tried and proven to have failed and;
- ii. where allowing the pupil to remain in school would be seriously detrimental to the education or welfare of other pupils and staff, (or of the pupil himself or herself).

Only the Head Teacher can exclude a pupil from school and may:

- not delegate that power to someone else;
- exclude a pupil for one or more fixed periods not exceeding a total of 45 school days in any one school year;
- also exclude a pupil permanently;
- also convert a fixed period exclusion into a permanent exclusion, if he or she decides circumstances warrant this.

In all cases the Head Teacher must promptly:

- inform the pupil's parent of the period of the exclusion, or that the exclusion is permanent;
- give the reasons for the exclusion;
- advise the parent that he or she may make representations about the exclusion to the governing body's discipline committee;
- advise the parent how his or her representations may be made;
- in the case of a permanent exclusion being confirmed, remove a pupil from the school roll on the school day either:
 - i. after the appeal committee's confirmation of permanent exclusion;
 - ii. on expiry of the time allowed for appeals to be made;
 - iii. the pupil takes up a place elsewhere before events i. or ii. occur.

The Head Teacher must immediately notify both the LA and the Governing Body's discipline committee of the details of an exclusion, (including the reasons for it) in the following cases:

- permanent exclusions
- fixed period exclusions are converted to permanent exclusions;
- fixed period exclusions total more than five school days in any one term;
- an exclusion would result in the loss of an opportunity to take an external exam;

There are statutory procedures involving disciplinary and appeals committees for the further process of dealing with exclusions and appeals against such actions. Meanwhile absence should be recorded as authorised. Teachers are responsible for setting work for an excluded pupil who remains on the school roll.

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is monitored by the *Governing Body* and will be reviewed in four years time, or earlier if necessary.

Signed _____

Date _____