

Attendance Policy

Policy

Rationale

A child's success at school is likely to be affected negatively if their attendance is poor. Those who do not attend regularly may fall behind in their learning leading to feelings of frustration and unhappiness. As an inclusive school, we seek to provide environments in which all young people can flourish as a member of a happy, caring and safe community. It is our goal that each of our pupils attends school regularly and on time, making the most of the opportunities available to them. We believe that promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school and wider community.

We promote positive behaviour and good attendance through our use of an appropriate curriculum which is geared to the child's age and ability. We aim to create a learning community, which benefits from the positive behaviour, regular attendance and well-being of its pupils and staff. Good attendance and behaviour are recognised and praised.

All children should be at school, on time, every day that it is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Schools have a legal duty to publish attendance figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty and responsibility to ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis.

It is acknowledged that children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems, which arise with attendance, are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend it is inappropriate to cover up this absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the parents and the child the impression that attendance does not matter and in fact will only make the situation worse.

ESTYN states:

"There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Research shows that missing 17 days of school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a GCSE grade across all subjects. In the workplace unauthorised absences would not be accepted and we need to help our children and young people to prepare for the workplace"

"The statistical link between attendance and attainment is strong. In Wales in 2014, over 92% of pupils with NO absence attained the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2. For pupils with attendance between 80 – 90%, this figure drops notably to 77% of pupils. Based on the statutory number of 190 school days per year, a pupil with 90% attendance will miss 19 days of schooling each year. Between entering primary school in the reception class to the end of primary education in Year 6, a pupil with an average attendance of 90% will miss 133 full days of school. This is well over half a year of learning."

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, every case is different and we will always try to support families to improve the situation. This policy is designed to help teachers, parents and pupils understand their rights,

responsibilities and roles when it comes to school attendance. By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves at least over 94%, whilst our expectation is that our pupils will be in school 100% of the time.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- give attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure consistency and rigour;
- provide support, advice and guidance to families;
- use attendance data systematically to evaluate success;
- use rewards to celebrate good attendance;
- use sanctions sensitively and only when necessary;
- work in partnership with the Education Welfare Service to improve attendance;
- support pupils returning to school after significant periods of absence.

Commitments (rights, responsibilities and roles)

- All schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take attendance registers twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education.
- This policy is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

All schools will work in partnership with young people, parents and families so that pupils can benefit from the educational opportunities provided to them at school.

Involvement with Other Guidance

This policy is to be interpreted in accordance with Welsh Government Guidance and Codes of Practice that may be issued from time to time. It is acknowledged that new guidance may be issued by Welsh Government after the adoption of this policy.

Llangatwg Community School Attendance Policy

1. Registration

- 1.1 To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils' attendance marks are registered electronically via the Capita School Information Management System (SIMS).
- 1.2 Pupils are registered at the beginning of the morning and period 4 afternoon session.
- 1.3 Teachers are required to record present or absent against each pupil's name. Absence marks must be followed up with the appropriate code being added once the reason for absence has been ascertained (see below).
- 1.4 The school, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance Codes 2010:

B Educated off-site	Approved Educational Activity
C Other authorised circumstance	Authorised Absence
D Dual-registered	Approved Educational Activity
E Excluded	Authorised Absence
F Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G Family holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
H Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I Illness	Authorised Absence
J Interview	Approved Educational Activity
L Late (before registers close)	Present
M Medical appointment	Authorised absence
N No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised Absence
P Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
R Religious observance	Authorised Absence
S Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
U Late after registers close	Unauthorised Absence
V Educational Visit or Trip	Approved Educational Activity
W Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
Y Partial or enforced closure	Attendance not required
X Non-compulsory school age abs	Attendance not required
# School closed to all pupils	Attendance
Z Pupils not on role	Attendance not required

2. Absence, lateness and medical appointments

- 2.1 Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone at the beginning of the first day of their child's absence. The school will monitor telephone calls each morning.
- 2.2 Should a pupil be absent from school without explanation, the school will for contact home where a request will be sent to parents asking them to make contact with the school both as a safeguarding precaution and also to allow parents to indicate the reason for absence and provide an indication of when their child will be able to return to school. Unless an indication in terms of length of time, is given, parents are expected to inform the school at the beginning of each subsequent day of absence unless other arrangements have been mutually agreed.
- 2.3 Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking explanation.
- 2.4 Time to time the school may operate a 'late at the gate' scheme in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school. The school has the right to include lateness within the framework of their Behaviour Policy. Lateness, especially if persistent should be treated in the same way as irregular attendance. Parents can be prosecuted if the issue of persistent lateness is not resolved. Lateness can be as damaging to a pupil's educational career as persistent absence can impact upon learning.
- 2.5 If a child arrives late to school, pupils / parents must ensure that they sign in to a 'late book' contained the reception stating a reason for being late. If pupils are required to leave school within the day, prior notice must be given to the school (agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher).
- 2.6 Whenever possible medical appointments should be booked outside of the school day. If appointments are not possible outside of the school day, then proof of the appointment will be required and pupils should return to school afterwards unless there is a valid medical reason given. Where an absence is authorised, the school will use the appropriate code to record the absence. If a pupil is feeling unwell during the school day. A decision will be made as to whether the pupil should be sent home or not.

3. Authorisation of absence (including holidays)

- 3.1 Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school. The school will exercise caution in the authorisation of absence and parents must seek to provide the school with a full picture of the reasons and in some circumstances documentary evidence relating to their child's absence. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 states that all absences are to be treated as unauthorised until schools have agreed that a satisfactory explanation has been given which should normally be within one day. If a reason is accepted it needs to be recorded on the SIMs system using the correct code.

3.2 The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance. The school will only authorise family holidays at the head teacher's discretion where parents are able to demonstrate that in the individual circumstances warrant it being authorised over and above the priority of maintaining a child's education.

The school is very clear about the effect of term time holiday absence on student attainment performance and progress as they will be at a severe disadvantage compared to their peers.

In relation to looked after children and to ensure a LAC child enjoys a normal family experience as possible, any requests for leave of absence will be made by the Foster Carer directly to the school in the same manner as any other parent.

3.3 When assessing requests for a holiday, the Headteacher will consider:

- The age of the child
- The time of year of the proposed trip;
- The length and purpose of the time off;
- Any impact on continuity of learning;
- Overall attendance pattern;
- The stage of education
- The child's progress
- Any guidance issued by Neath Port Talbot and Welsh Government

Balanced with

- The circumstances of the family
- The wishes and views of the parents; and
- The purpose of the holiday

The above list is not exhaustive and the Headteacher is entitled to take into account other factors which they feel to be relevant to the exercise of their discretion. Parents are expected to be clear at the time of making their request the family circumstances, purpose of the trip and any views they have.

3.4 Should the holiday take the total absence due to holidays for the year to being over 10 days then only in **exceptional circumstances** should this holiday be granted. The test of **exceptional circumstances** applies only to holidays which accumulate over the course of the year to more than 10 days. Holidays which accumulate to 10 days or less throughout the year need to be considered in accordance with paragraph 3.3 above.

- 3.5 The school has set 94% attendance as a minimum target for all pupils.

The fundamental principle underlying this policy is that schools are open for 190 days a year. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Parents are to be actively encouraged to take time off and book holidays outside of term time as it is only with parental cooperation will it be possible to achieve and maintain a high level of attendance and attainment.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time, it would be normal for the Headteacher to closely scrutinise the individual circumstances of the request if it relates to a term time absence.

- 3.6 As children become older and progress through the stages of education there will inevitably be different circumstances applicable as they will be learning new topics and studying for a different key stage. Likewise, it should also not be assumed that if there is an extended family / friends holiday where the children attend different schools that if the term time absence is agreed in one school that the other school will also agree the absence. The exercise of discretion lies solely with the individual Headteacher of any particular school and the circumstances and attendance records of individual children will inevitably differ.

4. Early Intervention

- 4.1 The school recognises the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by text message, social media, leaflets, parents' evenings, school reports and the school website.
- 4.2 When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. Where possible work will be provided to ensure that the pupil can keep as up to date as possible with the curriculum.
- 4.3 The EWO, in conjunction with the school will ensure that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.
- 4.4 There are a range of initiatives and rewards that can be utilised across Neath Port Talbot schools and some examples include:
- **An attendance reward** that may be used as an incentive for performing pupils. In the school, names are drawn out of a hat and that child gets the reward.
 - **An attendance strategy /policy** which is reviewed regularly and its requirements clearly understood by both pupils and parents.

- **Speaking with your local dentist and GP surgery** about less-obtrusive appointment times for pupils. It has been discovered that surgeries are sometimes now preferred appointments for parents and pupils in the first instance.
- **Parents Evening** where parents can contribute on a number of issues affecting the school, including attendance. Parents are said to be more likely to be engaged and supportive if they are included in the decision-making process.
- **Effective reintegration of pupils** when they return from absence.
- **A pupil planner** which can store a pupil's attendance information. This can then be signed by parents and teachers each week.
- **Making sure parents and pupils** are clear on the impact of non-attendance on their learning
- **Visits from the local sports teams** such as Ospreys or Swansea City's club ambassador.
- **Fully utilising school social media** to highlight and promote attendance and ensure that parents are full aware of expectations.
- **An attendance prize** awarded termly to the best performing class or pupil.
- **A visit to each class** on a Monday to announce their collective attendance that week. This has been demonstrated in our schools with a Green / Amber / Red report relating to Good / okay / could do better.
- **Engaging your head boy and girl** with attendance issues and ensure that the message is clear to pupils.
- **Pupil post cards** – sent from the head to praise good attendance.
- **League tables** - Pupils chosen to have breakfast with the Headteacher on a set day.
- **League tables** – having a display board where points are used to identify classes that are doing well.
- **Point systems** – pupils gain points for attendance and punctuality and then get a prize for achieving the most but also for making the best effort.
- **Certificates-** for attendance, punctuality, best achievement, most improved attendance etc

- 4.5 Head teachers and school staff are encouraged to try new strategies and continually seek to try and promote positive attendance.

Hierarchy of Sanctions

- 4.6 Schools always seek to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit from parents the support deemed necessary to ensure pupils attend school, sanctions may be used. In the first instance, parents may receive letters which:
- Request reasons for their child's absence;
 - Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
 - Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
 - Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their support in getting their child to school on time;
 - Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence and the consequences of this in relation to penalty notices and involvement of EWO.;
 - Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
 - Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice;
 - Advise them that a referral has been made to the Educational Welfare Service.
- 4.7 In some circumstances following warning letters, the school may seek further advice and recommendation from EWS or request that the EWS issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. The school should warn a parent when their child's attendance is approaching the criteria for a fixed penalty notice. Once the criteria is met for a fixed penalty notice contact should be made with the EWS to discuss issuing a fixed penalty notice or prosecuting the parent for failing to secure regular attendance.
- 4.8 The criteria for issuing a fixed penalty notice is set by the Local Authority. The code of conduct can be located on the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council website.

The criterion for considering a fixed penalty notice is currently as follows:

- when a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions (five school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences during the current term and this brings the pupils overall pupil attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive);
- unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays in term-time if the absences take the pupils overall school attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive);

- persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed ('U' code as in the Codes Guidance Document 2010). Persistent for the purpose of this document means at least 10 sessions of late arrival within a term; these do not need to be consecutive but should bring the pupils overall school attendance to under 90% in the school year to date;
- 4.9 When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. A referral might be made when, for example:
- A pattern of irregular unauthorised attendance has developed;
 - A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established with the pupil attendance dropping to below 90% with unauthorised absences.
 - There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance; or
 - A pattern of truancy is persisting.
- 4.10 The school will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.
- 4.11 Before considering whether to make a referral to the local authority, action should be taken by the school to improve a pupils attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems, such as:
- bullying
 - experience of racism
 - caring responsibilities
 - ill health
 - unmet SEN, or unidentified SEN or disability

5. Monitoring and evaluation

- 5.1 The school and EWO are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records through SIMS for each pupil.
- 5.2 The EWO meets regularly with every school to discuss individual cases of absenteeism, truancy or lateness and reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions to date. Decisions are taken at this time as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral to the Educational Welfare Service. As a result of the EWO's overview, the EWO will strive to promote consistency when working with a family that might have children in more than one school.
- 5.3 The appropriate member of staff in the school will meet with the Educational Welfare Officer as required to review cases and seek support. The Educational Welfare Officer is responsible for contributing to the drive for school

effectiveness through providing advice on proven good practice and promoting attendance.

- 5.4 Attendance data is reviewed continuously by the Senior Leadership Team of the school and is used to populate the Self-Evaluation document and inform the School Improvement Plan.
- 5.5 The school and EWO should make use of attendance data to try and identify trends or problems and to evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies.

6. School Targets

- 6.1 Parents are informed of their child's attendance via reports.
- 6.2 The target for the school is set annually by Governors and reported in their annual report to parents.
- 6.3 Attendance is reported to governors in every termly meeting via the head teacher report.

List of appendices

Appendix 1 – 'Five Step System of Attendance Management'

Appendix 1

THE 5 STEP APPROACH TO MANAGING ATTENDANCE

In order to achieve our shared goal, of improving attendance and welfare for all children, young people and families a good working relationship between the EWS and the school is vital. The EWS will work with the designated person who is responsible for initiating the 'in school' action, and making referrals in accordance with the 5 Step Approach.

Step 1: School Based Interventions

This step focuses on school based approaches to supporting and improving attendance for all pupils.

Every school should have policies and procedures in place designed to ensure its pupils attend regularly. There should be a consistent and whole school approach, where all members of the school community are clear about their role. In summary, they should:

- Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos;
- Have a clear policy on absence, stating how it will be managed;
- Apply the policy fairly and consistently to all pupils;
- Shared the policy with all parents/carers at the time of admission to the school and regularly draw it to their attention;
- Have a named member of their management team with lead responsibility for attendance;
- Re-enforce and communicate positive attendance messages throughout the year;
- Have effective systems for monitoring attendance, including first day calling, analysis of data and follow up by form tutors when pupils return from absence;
- Have efficient systems of registration which encourage children and parents to account promptly for any absences, which are in accordance with legal requirements and which show a consistent approach to the classification of absences as either authorised and unauthorised;
- Set and monitor an annual absence target;
- Nominate a school governor with a specific attendance remit;
- Ensure all relevant staff receive training about attendance issues;
- Ensure regular training for staff with registration responsibilities and monitor of practice to ensure high standards by class teachers and others with key responsibilities;
- Promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and parents;
- Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern
- Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance;
- Make best use of additional support for pupils and parents with the greatest need;

- When absence problems do not respond to interventions from class teacher/form tutor or Learning Manager; refer appropriately to the designated person with responsibility for attendance.

Research has shown that schools' success in improving attendance depends on continual attention to detail, consistent application of agreed procedures and most of all the provision of a stimulating and appropriate curriculum for the needs of all pupils.

Step 1

- ❖ Regular monitoring of registers.
- ❖ Phoning/texting home on the 1st day of unauthorised absence.
- ❖ A referral will be made to the EWO on the 4th consecutive day of unauthorised absence.
- ❖ Liaison with other school staff.
- ❖ Keeping records of actions/contacts regarding each case

Step 2: Advice and Consultation

- Parent/guardian(s) should be encouraged to visit school to discuss attendance and strategies for improvement. The parent and pupil should be given achievable target(s) to improve attendance. A date should be set for review.
- If attendance has not improved the Class Teacher, Learning Manager or designated person responsible for attendance should prioritise the list of pupils to be referred for concern.
- There should be regular formal advice meetings between Education Welfare staff and the Learning Managers / Headteacher to identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This should include regular examination of attendance registers. The frequency of which will vary according to mutually agreed need. These should take place in both Secondary and Primary schools as appropriate. The Senior Lead for Attendance should attend these meetings at agreed intervals.
- The school and EWO will discuss and agree actions which needs to be taken; when and by whom.
- Commitment required from all parties to undertake agreed actions by the next scheduled meeting.
- Discussions, advice and actions to be recorded, with a copy kept by both the EWS and school at the end of each consultation and other appropriate feedback as agreed with school staff.

- EWS will provide advice and support to the school on issues relating to attendance, access to education, welfare and safeguarding, exclusion or related matters in order that future action can be agreed.
- School to keep accurate & up-to-date electronic casework records of any contact and communication with parents/guardians/pupils/other agencies.
- The EWS will feedback information in relation to work which has been undertaken on cases open to EWS.
- An early referral and subsequent involvement of both school/EWO may help to prevent a child going missing, or prevent truancy and other social problems from becoming entrenched. Delay in making an appropriate referral is often detrimental to the interests of the child involved and once truancy becomes entrenched it can be very difficult to bring about a return to regular school attendance

Schools may wish to consider using a formal 'Attendance agreement' which outlines expectations, actions and responsibilities for the pupil and their parent(s) for improved attendance, which they must agree and sign together with the school staff.

PROPOSED AGENDA FOR MEETING WITH LINK EWO

It is best practice to plan for regular meetings with the School's link EWO.

The EWS suggest designated person for attendance should attend these meetings.

- **General Preventative** – to discuss, agree and review procedures and short-term strategies or projects to improve general punctuality and attendance in the year group/whole school.
- **Early Intervention** – to identify, discuss and review individual pupils with emerging punctuality or attendance problems. Decide what school-based or other actions could be used to address concerns.
- **New Referrals to EWS for support** – to identify, discuss and make formal referrals to the EWS of those pupils that have a level of unauthorised absence where EWS intervention is needed over and above school's actions to address attendance concerns.
- **Reviewing Cases** – EWO and school to provide feedback and share information about progress with existing referred cases via return of the referral or email.

Step 3: Referral to the Education Welfare Service

- Referrals should be made only after appropriate strategies have been explored by the school and undertaken at step 2.

- The referral will only be accepted if there is evidence of work completed by the School.
- The referral will only be accepted if the School has undertaken the ERW non-attendance process, sent appropriate letters and met with parents/carers to seek improvement/address any difficulties.
- Referrals to EWS can only be made if there are unauthorised absences and must be made using formal EWS referral forms.
- Once the case has been formally referred to the EWS, the case will be monitored by the School and the EWO and joint working will ensure consistency of support for the pupil.
- Upon referral acceptance, the Local Authority and ERW process will begin and the EWO will maintain communication on cases until the attendance improves, the support necessary is implemented or the case goes to prosecution.

Mandatory Practice

If there are concerns that the pupil's family have moved out of the area, without leaving a forwarding address/name of new school, the School must follow the Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) protocol and make every effort to find the pupil by all means necessary before forwarding the case to the EWS for further tracking.

Good Practice

Before accepting a referral from a School, the EWS will expect the school to have first undertaken a number of steps to address the pupil's non-attendance. These would include:

- action by the class teacher/form teacher;
- action by the designated person responsible for attendance or Head or Deputy Head (primary)
- contact with parents; including the school sending ERW letters 1 and 2 as a minimum to the parents before formally involving the EWS;
- Inviting parents to a meeting in school ensuring that this is correctly documented.
- Offering help and support in the first instance;
- Challenging the outcome if not satisfactory – i.e. if absences for illness continue to be covered by notes – advise parents that medical confirmation is required.
- Undertaking a minimum of one face to face meeting and speaking to the parents about making improvements/addressing attendance difficulties

Step 4: Case Review and Assessment

When there is no progress at Steps 1, 2 & 3. The EWO will undertake a range of actions and interventions aimed at facilitating the pupil's return to regular school attendance.

Casework will be based on an assessment of needs and action planned appropriate to the individual circumstances of each case, but may include:

- Home visits in order to assess the situation and agree a way forward. Arranging meetings between the school, parents and pupil in school or elsewhere.
- A range of interventions which could include liaison and joint working with other professionals. All casework will involve close and continuous liaison with the pupil's school. Regular reviews and feedback to schools through a variety of methods which may include face to face consultation, phone, and written communication on work undertaken.
- In cases where the main causes of non-attendance may be school-related (e.g. alleged bullying, peer pressure, difficulties with a particular lesson or teacher) the EWO will discuss these with the school in order to develop strategies to overcome these difficulties.
- Keeping accurate casework records detailing all EWS involvement and interventions.
- Ensuring that parents are fully aware of their legal responsibilities and subsequent actions if attendance does not improve.

Step 5: Statutory Action

The Education Welfare Service will ensure that all parties are fully aware of the legal processes with regards to penalty notices or prosecution for regular non-attendance under the Education Act 1996.

