



Policy on Attendance and Punctuality 2016

Introduction

This policy is based on All Wales Attendance Framework guidelines issued by the Welsh Government and on the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in relation to education.

We believe that it is vital that children and young people have access to appropriate and effective learning provision and opportunities.

Any barriers to learning need be identified early and removed, so that children and young people can engage in the educational provision they need to achieve their full potential.

Contents

1. Aims
2. Pupil Registration Responsibilities and Expectations
3. Attendance and Punctuality Improvement Strategies
4. Monitor, Evaluate and Develop
5. Holidays taken during School Term
6. Penalties
 - 6.1 Fixed Penalty Notifications
 - 6.2 The Prosecution Process
 - 6.3 Absence Procedures
7. Data and Targets
8. Bibliography and Legislative References

1. Aims

- i. Maintain and improve upon the attendance percentage of all the school's pupils.
- ii. Ensure that everybody associated with this school, including pupils, parents, teachers and governors, prioritizes attendance and punctuality.
- iii. Develop a strategy that clearly defines responsibilities and promotes consistent implementation.
- iv. Provide parents and pupils with advice, support and guidance.
- v. Develop effective data gathering and analysis methods on attendance-related matters.
- vi. Further develop our positive and regular link of home and school contact.
- vii. Implement a rewards and sanctions system.
- viii. Promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and other services and agencies.
- ix. Recognize individual pupils' requirements when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

2. Pupil Registration Responsibilities and Expectations

The school registration system is based on the guidelines contained in The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 and on Annex 4.i Registration practices and codes - Circular 47/2006 - Inclusion and Pupil Support.

SIMS.net computerized attendance recording systems are used at this school in every registration class.

Pupils are registered present or absent at the beginning of each morning session and during the afternoon session. As SIMS.net does not accommodate missing marks, it is ensured that there is a record for every pupil.

i. Registering Attendance at the School

Every staff member who is involved in the registration process is totally aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping a register is of the utmost importance and is a STATUTORY requirement.

ii. The Meaning of Unauthorized Absence

Unauthorized absence is defined as absence not approved by one of the school's representatives, and includes all unexplained absences. There will be occasions when the school may authorize a pupil's absence, and therefore no offence is deemed to have been committed. The school's decision to authorize or not to authorize absence is therefore a critical factor as the Local Authority decides whether it is to prosecute parents as prosecution is only possible for unauthorized absences.

It is important that schools exercise caution when authorizing absence. If the school harbours suspicions about parents' explanation, the absence should be further investigated and should not be authorized until the school deems that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved. The school's decision whether or not to authorize absence is of critical importance in determining the Welfare and Attendance Service's involvement. If the school has authorized a pupil's absence, there is no case in law for the parents to answer.

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE SCHOOL AND NOT THE PARENTS AUTHORIZES AN ABSENCE.

3. Attendance and Punctuality Improvement Strategies used by the School

It is imperative that the parents and pupils of this school accept that attendance is given high priority and that there should be accountability and an explanation for **EVERY** absence.

Class teachers have a key role during the registration periods, as their attitude influences the maintenance and improvement of attendance.

It is of paramount importance that the reason for the absence is established early on.

- It is emphasized that school has to discover the reason for any absence and that a member of the school's staff will contact parents if the school has not heard from them by the closure of registration at 9.20 a.m. on the first day of any absence.
- Wherever possible, pupils are urged to tell their parents to contact the school by letter, phone call or text message.
- Pupils and their parents are encouraged, wherever possible, to arrange medical or dental appointments outside school hours and that this is not a valid reason for missing a school session.
- The correct absence code is recorded as soon as possible - parents are not allowed more than a week to provide an explanation for an absence.

Termly Attendance Rewards

The school implements a rewards scheme for good attendance:

- Certificates at the end of every half term (to be awarded at assembly).
- Certificates for the year.
- Photos of the children with their certificates are posted on the school' website and notice board.

School Statutory Requirements

Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 require schools to register pupils' attendance twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The school may be requested to present the register in a court of law as evidence in a case of absence. The register may also contribute information to end-of-term reports, records of achievement, and references for secondary school leavers. An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial in order to tackle poor attendance and punctuality within a school. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.

4. Monitoring, evaluating and developing

The class teachers are responsible for checking that attendance records are correct and up to date. Part of the headteacher's/deputy's responsibility is to ensure that class teachers discharge their duties of registering attendance.

Procedures

- The attendance officer/deputy/headteacher to check that registers have been completed, with no missing marks, by every Friday afternoon. A member of the school's staff will contact parents to obtain a reason for absence if necessary.
- Data is reviewed on a daily basis by class teachers.
- Discuss with the individual class teacher of the pupils causing concern and contact the home where necessary. This can be recorded in SIMS and the log will then be available to the Welfare Officer if further contact is needed.
- Every register will be examined and monitored closely at the end of every half term to find out whether there are patterns of absence that should be investigated, e.g. any truancy.
- A half term evaluation to be shared and discussed at the first staff meeting of every half term and an action plan drawn up as required.
- Arrange the Welfare Officer's visit to the school on a regular basis, according to the need. Any member of staff who is worried about a pupil's attendance can participate in these meetings.
- Attendance will be addressed at Friday morning assemblies.
- The best classes/years to be commended and the results to be celebrated on the school's notice boards.
- Reward with certificates every half term - those who have attained their target and those with full attendance.

Attendance Team

This team includes a class teacher member, the headteacher and Welfare Officer. The Attendance Team's principal purpose is to discuss and encourage attendance. It will play a prominent role in focusing on any individual cases that give cause for concern.

Some of their strategies will involve:

- contacting the home to arrange to meet parents
- meeting the designated attendance governor
- referring to external agencies when required
- introducing an Attendance Support Plan for individual pupils
- considering any alternative education/training measures that would be better-suited to meeting a pupil's needs.

Role of the Education Welfare and Attendance Service Officers

The principal role of the Welfare Officer is to contribute towards the Local Authority and school's effort to ensure schools' effectiveness in relation to attendance. The Welfare Officer needs to work in partnership with the school, pupils and parents to ensure the right to education and regular attendance. From time to time, the Officer will need to contact a network of agencies that provide individuals who have specific needs with specialist support in terms of

education, health and social welfare.

In addition to this, the Welfare Officer will:

- consult the headteacher regarding the school's absence levels
- consult the headteacher regarding the effectiveness of the school's strategies
- note how the school intends to evaluate the policy's effectiveness
- remind the school of the policy review schedule
- consult external agencies
- identify any need for extra resources.

5. Family Holidays taken during School Term

1. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give governing bodies discretion to authorize a pupil's absence to go on a family holiday during the school term.
2. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their children from school for the purpose of a holiday, but it is possible to ask permission in line with the policy and procedure adopted by the school's governing body.
3. The governing body should consider each case on its own merits, and can authorize or not authorize the request.
4. It is a matter for the governing body to draw up a policy to assist it in the way it exercises its discretion. Such a policy should address the factors that are relevant when considering requests, and what weight should be attached to those factors. Relevant factors could include the following:
 - the time of year
 - the duration of the holiday
 - the purpose of the holiday
 - the impact on continuity of learning
 - the family's circumstances
 - the school's current attendance
 - the pupil's current attendance
 - the likelihood that the timing of the absence will clash with national tests.
5. It should be emphasized that the governing body is not bound to the above list nor is the list comprehensive. In accordance with the school's circumstances, some of the factors above could be irrelevant. Similarly, some other factors not listed above could be applicable.
6. The governing body is entitled to depart from its usual policy in terms of how it should exercise its discretion, if it has valid reasons for doing so.
7. Without prejudice to the above and in accordance with the Regulations 2010, only in exceptional circumstances should the governing body allow a pupil more than 10 days of absence (per year) for holidays during the school term.
8. Any absence not authorized will be treated as an unauthorized absence.

6. Penalties

Fixed Penalty Notices

The act empowers Gwynedd Council's designated officers, headteachers, including their nominated deputies, and the police to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to the parents of pupils absent from school without authorization.

This school will consider using this penalty in cases where efforts are made to improve levels of unauthorized absences, before they become an established pattern and become persistent absences, whilst reducing the need for lengthy and costly prosecutions. Such a course of action will be considered for one or more of the following cases:

- That at least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorized absence during the term. They need not be consecutive.
- At least 10 sessions of unauthorized absences (5 school days) due to holidays taken during the term or a delay in returning from extended holidays.
- Persistently late arrival at the school, i.e. following register closure in the current session. 'Persistent' implies late arrival on at least 10 occasions.
- Regular truancy.
- That a child has been banned from being in a public place at any time during school hours during the first five days of the exclusion. An 'excluded child' is a child who has been excluded from the school for a fixed period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The Prosecution Process

The Education Authority acknowledges its responsibility, in a case of serious absence and when all other reasonable efforts have failed, to prosecute parents through the Magistrates Courts under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and to take the following action:

Prosecution is considered when a pupil's attendance has fallen below 70% over a two-term period. Prosecution is not deemed appropriate under certain circumstances, namely:

- the parents' mental health
- when prosecution would intensify a difficult situation in which other agencies such as Social Services are involved
- when an illness has been certified by a medical practitioner
- depending on parents' particular circumstances.

The parent cannot be prosecuted when the school has originally authorized an absence.

Before prosecuting, the following measures must be followed:

- Implement a broad range of preventative strategies at school level and via the Education Welfare Service.
- Hold a Strategy Meeting.
- Assess the parents' responsibility for the absence.
- Issue the parents with a final warning.
- Consider the appropriateness of applying to the Magistrates Court for an Education Supervision Order.

The Head of Education will decide whether or not to prosecute in consultation with the County

Solicitor. As a rule, the Education Welfare Officer attends the Court on behalf of the Education Authority and presents the case, although a member of the County's Legal Department represents the Authority under certain circumstances.

Absence Procedures

It is imperative that pupils and parents at this school understand that high priority is given to attendance. They must also understand that undivided and constant attention will be given to any absence and that accountability is expected.

This school regularly monitors attendance data and operates by referring individual pupils' cases to the attention of the School Attendance Team when there is concern or a lack of information about absences.

7. Data and Targets

Attendance data comparison for Gwynedd, Wales and the school is provided below:

PUPIL ABSENCE

(WALES RELEASE December 2015

<http://llyw.cymru/statistics-and-research/?skip=1&lang=en>)

	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Overall absence				
Gwynedd	5.4	5.7	4.9	
Wales	6.2	6.3	5.2	
Ysgol Llanbedrog	5.5	5.5	5.6	6.7
Unauthorized Absence				
Gwynedd	0.4	0.4	0.3	
Wales	0.7	0.9	1.0	
Ysgol Llanbedrog	0	0	1.1	0.2

Overall absence targets for Gwynedd and the school

	2015-16	2016-2017	2017-18
Gwynedd	4.7	4.5	4.0
Ysgol Llanbedrog	4.5	4.5	4.6

The Attendance Target for Ysgol Llanbedrog 2016-17= 95.5%

8. Bibliography and Legislative References

This Policy is based on the following legislation, guidelines and documents:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- SEN Code of Practice for Wales 2004
- The Learning Country and the Learning Country II: Vision into Action, Welsh Assembly Government (2006)
- School Effectiveness Framework
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government (2005)
- Children and Young People's Workforce Development Strategy
- Behaving and Attending: Action Plan Responding to the National Behaviour and Attendance Review, Welsh Assembly Government (2009)
- Inclusion and Pupil Support, Welsh Assembly Government Circular No. 47/2006
- Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units, Welsh Assembly Government Circular No. 001/2004
- Improving Attendance, Estyn (2006)
- The Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (Wales) Regulations 2009
- Services for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs, Wales Audit Office and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, 2009
- The Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013

Adopted: Summer Term 2016 (to be reviewed annually)

Chairperson: _____ Headteacher: _____

Date: _____