

Policy and Guidance on School Attendance

Department	Education Welfare Service
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1. Introduction

Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for education settings, governors, Local Authority (LA), parents and carers, children and young people. Pupils who fail to attend regularly not only diminish the value of the education provided but may also jeopardise their future life chances to succeed.

Good attendance has a positive impact on wellbeing. Establishing good attendance patterns from an early age is vital for social development. The inter-relationship between attendance and wellbeing is considered so strong, attendance is often considered a good measure for learner wellbeing.

An attendance policy is one that requires commitment from all staff employed within the education setting, together with governors, parents and carers, pupils and the community in which the school is located.

2. National context

Attendance is key to whole school improvement and has direct influence on a pupils' learning, progress and well-being.

The Welsh Government Guidance document, *Inclusion and Pupil Support 2016*, provides advice and guidance and sets out responsibilities for maintaining high levels of attendance, positive behaviour and well-being of all pupils.

Welsh Government Guidance, *Belonging, Engaging, and Participating 2023*, supports maintained schools, PRUs, parents/carers and local authorities with improving learner engagement and attendance. It sets out approaches that can be used by schools, PRUs and EOTAS settings to help improve learner engagement and attendance, and by local authority services and other partners when attendance issues escalate. The approaches should be adopted, developed and built upon so that they are aligned to the needs of children and parents/carers.

Links to all Welsh Government Education and Skills Support Documents can be found here:

[Pupil inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and attendance | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)

3. Local context

Caerphilly CBC's Education Strategy - 'Pursuing Excellence Together.'

Learning has the power to transform the lives of children, young people and adults. In Caerphilly County Borough Council, all those involved in this learning believe that a culture of trust, strong working relationships and a passion for making a difference, will lead to sustained improvement over the coming years. We have great aspirations which are sometimes constrained but never defined by

circumstance.

We will remain focused on providing our absolute best and will be unswerving in our commitment.

We aim to promote regular attendance and ensure that all pupils #AttendtoAchieve in order to fulfill their potential.

4. Legal context

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age (5-16), receives efficient full-time education, suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and any additional learning needs (ALN) the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or educated otherwise by the LA; the law also permits parents to educate their child at home.

The Education Act and associated regulations places a legal obligation on the LA, to enforce attendance and ensure that schools comply with robust registration practices and that they notify their respective LA, in cases of persistent and unauthorised absences, without reasonable justification.

Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents, the school and Local Authority (LA) shares collective responsibility to promote pupil attendance. Schools are also required by law to maintain specific records on the attendance of pupils.

All children in the care of the Local Authority must receive a suitable education, attend school regularly and on time.

Details on all legal proceedings relating to non-school attendance can be found here:

[All Wales attendance framework | GOV.WALES](#)

5. Registration

Schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to undertake an attendance register twice a day, at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It will also be used for end of term reports, records of achievement and reference requests, and information for other schools, LAs and external agencies. No pupil should be marked present unless in attendance at school or other agreed educational activity. The register should not have missing marks.

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a school are to be tackled. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.

All staff involved with the registration process should be made aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance and it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

The headteacher is the only person who can authorise that a pupil be added or removed from the register; this can only be done with the agreement of the LA.

Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance Codes can be found here:

[School attendance codes: guidance | GOV.WALES](#)

6. Policy aims.

- Provide education provisions with the necessary guidance to develop and implement a whole school attendance strategy and to deal with matters of irregular or poor attendance prior to referral to the Education Welfare Service
- Develop efficient and effective early intervention and support strategies for the more vulnerable pupils, particularly children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN), Looked After Children
- Encourage education provisions to work collaboratively with a range of partners to support and promote the welfare and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Ensure that the LA's role in tackling non-attendance is effectively implemented in schools/EOTAS provisions.
- Provide guidance in relation to the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) as a measure to improving attendance and safeguarding.
- Provide an outline of support available through the Education Welfare Service
- Identify schools, and parents/carers responsibilities.
- Provide toolkits and support for attendance self-evaluation.
- Outline information which should be included in School Attendance Policies
- Provide school attendance codes and explanations with a clear definition of authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Identify legalities around registration.

7. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The LA monitors attendance through the following process:

- Collection and robust analysing of attendance data on a regular basis to identify areas that would benefit from specific support.
- The attendance self-evaluation process
- Regular inspection of schools' attendance registers.
- ESTYN reports.
- Regular pre-arranged meetings between designated link staff and Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- Meetings with link staff from EOTAS and non-maintained provisions.
- Links with colleagues from other areas within the education directorate, e.g. Educational Psychologists, ALN officers, advisory teachers
- Challenge through Team Around the School meetings for schools causing concern or identified as requiring intense support.

The impact of the work of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will be evaluated annually through the Service Improvement Plan.

8. Designing an effective school attendance policy

An attendance policy is one that requires commitment from all staff employed within the education provision and will only be achieved successfully when agreed as the responsibility of the governing body, whole school staff, parents, carers, pupils and the wider school community.

The policy should:

- Give high priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure compliance with all statutory requirements.
- Ensure that clear information is regularly communicated to parents, carers and pupils.
- Include procedures for robust analysis of attendance data.
- Contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absences, lateness and post-registration truancy.
- Include a summary of effective and early intervention strategies to avoid absences becoming persistent and address persistent lateness and re- integration plans.
- Identify support for vulnerable groups of learners.
- Be alert to critical times in the academic year calendar (e.g. Key Stage 2/3 transfer).
- Provide for a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions including FPN's.

- Include information on a rewards system for good and improved attendance.
- Provide for effective links with the Education Welfare Service.
- Be monitored and reviewed annually.

Model attendance policies for Primary and Secondary Schools have been produced by Welsh Government and can be found here should you wish to adopt them:

[School attendance policy: templates for schools | GOV.WALES](#)

9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1. Parent/carer responsibilities

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their child/children attend the school at which they are registered, regularly, on time, suitably dressed and ready to learn (parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered).

Parents are encouraged to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children in a number of ways, including:

- taking an active interest in their child's school life and work.
- attending parents' evenings and other school events, if possible.
- ensuring that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time.
- being aware of letters from school which their child brings home or alternative communications from the school.
- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- ensuring that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance.
- always notifying the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence.
- avoiding booking family holidays during term-time.
- talking to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.
make all medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

If a child misses school without an explanation from the parent/carer, or if the school is not satisfied with the explanation, the absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised'.

Although parents/carers may provide a reason for the absence, it is the school that decides whether

the absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

Parents/carers should speak to their child’s class teacher for help and support if they think there may be a reason why their child does not want to go to school.

ATTENDANCE %	LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	OUTCOME
95-100% attendance	Best chance of success	Your child is taking full advantage of every learning opportunity.
90-95% attendance	At least 2 weeks of learning missed	Satisfactory. Your child may have to spend time catching up with work.
85-90% attendance	At least 4 weeks of learning missed	Your child may be at risk of underachieving and may need extra support from you to catch up with work.
80-85% attendance	At least 5 ½ weeks of learning missed	Your child’s poor attendance has a significant impact on learning.
Below 80% attendance	At least 7 ½ weeks of learning missed	Your child is missing out on a broad and balanced education. You are at risk of prosecution.

9.2. School and governing bodies responsibilities

All schools are expected to develop processes that promotes excellent pupil attendance. This includes:

- A clear attendance strategy.
- Effective leadership, identifying a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance.
- Effective self-evaluation and improvement planning processes to identify barriers alongside strategies which will have the desired impact. The link for the attendance self-evaluation toolkit with best practice examples can be found on the CCBC Intranet. Sample action plans, based on best practice, are also available via the EWS.
- Effective governor participation through a regular and active programme of support and challenge.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law relating to school attendance.
- Forensic monitoring of data to identify and track pupils with high levels and persistent absences, patterns and trends and the link to attainment, with particular focus on vulnerable groups.

- Establishing procedures for reintegrating persistent or long-term absentees, including pupils with significant medical concerns.
- Completing school registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session
- Reiterating to parents/carers the importance of contacting the school as early as possible on the first day of absence.
- Promoting positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.
- Ensuring regular evaluation of attendance by the governing body.
- Working towards ensuring all pupils are supported and valued and so want to attend school.
- Proactively manage lateness.
- Encouraging parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason.
- Identifying any absences that are not explained for each session and contact parents.
- Developing positive relationships with parents/carers and external agencies working with the family/pupil.
- Monitoring and evaluate the early intervention strategies adopted by the school.
- Holding more than one emergency contact number for each pupil (where reasonably possible).
- Regularly informing parents about their child's attendance and absence levels
- Holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable.
- Identifying pupils who need support from wider partners and agencies.
- Making the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority.
- Supporting pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

9.3. Local Authority Responsibilities - Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The role of an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is to address any issues or difficulties that might prevent regular attendance. They will explore the reasons behind school absence, offer information and guidance, undertake planned interventions, advise families about specialist support services and support referrals to appropriate services when required.

The EWS provides support to schools, pupils and parents to ensure regular attendance and address problems relating to absenteeism. EWO's identify barriers to accessing education and supporting strategies to encourage positive outcomes. There is an expectation that legal action will be explored if school attendance has not improved following the involvement of the EWO and other support services. They EWS offers training and resources to education settings to support and improve whole school attendance. These include attendance workshops for key school staff, seminars with senior leaders, attendance self-evaluation, training for governing bodies, and regular consultation meetings.

The EWS encourages collaborative working between schools, agencies, and pupils to support best outcomes. Agencies and support available include the school Nurse, youth service, Families First, CAMHS, inclusion services and early years teams.

Referrals (available on the CCBC intranet) should be made using the appropriate Education Welfare Service referral form only when:

- Early intervention strategies have failed.
- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed.
- Absences are persistent.
- A pattern of persistent lateness (after the close of the school register) has developed.
- Parents or carers withdraws a pupil from school having expressed an intention to electively home educate (EHE) but have not formally deregistered the pupil by advising the LA or school of their intentions.
- Parents or carers who have moved out of the area and a request for the pupil's records have not been received from a school in the new area.

10. Deleting learners from the school roll and children missing education

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 set out the circumstances in which schools must and must not delete learners from their admissions register.

Regulation 8 prescribes the grounds on which the name of a pupil of compulsory school age must be deleted from the admission register. These are:

- The pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a School Attendance Order and another school is substituted by the LEA for that named in the Order, or the Order is revoked.
- The pupil has been registered at another school.
- The school has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.
- The pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer resides within a reasonable distance from the school; each case should be referred to the Education Welfare Service/Officer for investigation before removal from the school roll.
- The pupil has been granted leave of absence exceeding 10 days for the purpose of a holiday and fails to attend school within 10 days immediately following, and the school is not satisfied that the absence is caused by sickness or any unavoidable cause.
- The pupil is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age.

- The pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than four weeks and both the proprietor of the school and the local education officer have failed, after reasonable enquiry, to locate the pupil.
- The pupil has died.
- The pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and does not intend to continue at school.
- In the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, that they have ceased to be a pupil at that school.
- Where the pupil is registered at a maintained school, that they have been permanently excluded from and the permanent exclusion of a pupil does not take effect until the governing body have discharged their duties under section 66 of the 1998 Act, and: a) The relevant person has stated in writing that he or she does not intend to appeal under Section 67 of the 1998 Act b) The time for bringing an appeal has expired and no appeal has been brought forward within that time; or c) an appeal brought within that time has been determined or abandoned.
- Where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education and has not, on completing such education, transferred to a reception class at the school.

For further guidance please refer to the WG Guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education (CME) here:

[Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education | GOV.WALES](#)

11. Safeguarding

All schools and education settings have statutory duties to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of learners. All staff members must be aware of and understand how to contact and raise concerns with the designated safeguarding person for the school. Absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and tracking and monitoring attendance has a crucial safeguarding role.

Absence can signal possible wellbeing issues or problems at home. Keeping Learners Safe guidance states that:

- Education settings should use their attendance policy and practice to ensure they are in regular contact with parents if a child is absent from school without authorisation or if they have patterns of absence. The child's attendance record at school could be an indicator of safeguarding concerns and an opportunity to identify and deal with abuse such as child exploitation.
- If a child is absent without notification, it could also be without the knowledge of their parent or

carer and could be an early sign that the child is missing from home or care. The education setting should ensure any absence is followed up quickly to ensure the child is safe and not missing from home or care.

- If the education setting identifies the child is missing from home or care they should refer to the Wales Practice Guide 'Safeguarding children who go missing from home or care'. Schools should regularly review attendance data to identify and respond to children who are at risk.

Schools should have first day absence reporting processes in place and processes for deciding whether welfare sightings are needed. These systems should ensure back-up staff are in place when key attendance staff are themselves absent.

Where a child is registered at a school and subsequently attends a setting such as EOTAS the original school should assume responsibility for checking the child's attendance (at both settings) on a daily basis.

It is good practice for all staff to share information when necessary and lawful and to work closely with the designated safeguarding person and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to ensure that support for vulnerable learners is timely and joined up. One of the specific circumstances in which data protection legislation allows the sharing of sensitive personal information without the consent of the child or parent is to safeguard children and protect them and others from harm. Staff should be trained to understand when information should be shared with other stakeholders and what information may be disclosed.

For more information regarding safeguarding see:

[Keeping Learners Safe \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Safeguarding guidance | GOV.WALES](#)

12. Legal proceedings

If a pupil who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly and attempts by the EWO and the school fail to secure regular attendance, consideration will be given to issuing the parent with a fixed penalty notice. Unless there are known mitigating circumstances, the LA could also consider taking legal action by issuing a summons against the parents to appear before the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. In deciding whether to take legal action, the EWO must be satisfied that:

- there is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction; it must consider what the defense case may be and how this is likely to affect the prosecution case.

- it is in the public interest to prosecute; in cases of any seriousness, a prosecution will usually take place unless there are public interest factors pointing against prosecution, which clearly outweigh those in favour.
- any action which it takes complies with the terms of the Human Rights Act.

If the pupil still fails to attend school regularly after legal action has been taken, the EWO will, if deemed appropriate, take further legal action.

The link to CCBC's Fixed Penalty Code of Conduct can be found on the CCBC Intranet.

13. Study Leave

Study leave should only be used for students during mock and public examinations. Study leave should be recorded as authorised absence registration code S. Schools should not use code B to record study leave. Such study leave is unsupervised time away from school (and was originally designed for learners to prepare for public examinations) and does not meet the legal definition of approved educational activity.

The decision to issue study leave or similar arrangement is at the discretion of the school's senior leaders. Where a school decides to issue such leave, it should do so sparingly and it should normally not exceed 15 days. While it may be a positive experience for some students, extended periods of study leave may not be in the best interest of students who do not have the skills or the attitude to make good use of unsupervised revision time and would be better off in school.

Preparation for examinations should be a carefully planned experience for students.

14. Reduced Timetables

Whilst part-time timetables, can help learners re-integrate into a school after a long absence or be a means of preventing greater absence, they have the overall effect of reducing time in school for learners and can have a negative impact on learner progress and wellbeing. In addition, part-time timetables can place pressures on families and have the potential to further pupil disengagement from education.

Part-time timetables should only be used in **exceptional circumstances** as a short-term measure, (generally no more than a six-week period) with the intention of returning to full-time attendance at school sooner, if feasible. Schools should ensure learners who are on a part-time timetable, receive a full education, where this is appropriate for individual learners. This could include for example, providing the learner with on-line or hard copy resources and work.

Schools should ensure learners can access on-line work prior to putting in place arrangements of that

nature for the continuation of full education.

Full information on reduced timetables can be found here:

[Belonging, engaging and participating: Guidance on improving learner engagement and attendance \(gov.wales\)](#)

CCBC reduced timetable protocol can be found on the CCBC intranet.

15. Holidays in term time and extended overseas visits.

Parents must apply in advance to take pupils out of school for holidays or overseas trips during term time. Requests should be considered individually, and schools should invite parents to discuss any such proposals. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday or trip if they believe that there are exceptional circumstances. If a school agrees absence and the pupil goes on holiday or trip for 10 days or less, absence is authorised (use code H).

If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on the holiday or trip, absence is unauthorised (Code G). If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is also recorded as unauthorised (Code G).

If the school considers that there are exceptional circumstances as to why the pupil should be granted approval for an overseas trip of more than 10 days, the approval can be given and the absence would be authorised and recorded under Code F. The use of a different code shows that an extended overseas trip should have a cultural justification other than for a holiday.

In these cases, the school should explain the following to parents:

- advance application for term time absence must be made in line with school attendance policy.
- the absence should be planned carefully with the school – leave and return date to be agreed the school will make the decision if the visit will be authorised.
- where possible, extended visits should be made during school holidays.
- outline the possible detrimental affect it could have on the learner's progress
- examination periods should be avoided.

Further advice on how to deal with children and young people who are taken on extended overseas trips or heritage visits by their family is available in appendix 6 of the Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education here:

[Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education | GOV.WALES](#)

16. Privacy Notices

Information received by the EWS, together with any additional information received from schools, pupils, parents/cares or other organisations, will be recorded and processed by the LA in accordance with the legal obligations placed on CCBC and our duties under the Education Act 1996, Education and Inspections Act 2006 and The Children Act 1989.

Further information on how the information will be processed and used is available in the form of a full privacy notice and can be found at www.caerphilly.gov.uk.