

Attendance Policy

Ffederasiwn Ysgolion **Llanidloes** Schools' Federation



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Rationale

- The Federation bases its attendance policy on the guidelines as set out by the Welsh Government and the Local Authority (LA).
- Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents, the Federation shares with them, and the LA, responsibility for encouraging good attendance and improving poor attendance.
- The schools are required by law to maintain specific records and to produce specified information on the attendance of pupils.
- Statutory obligation apart, the schools are committed to improvements in attendance standards as a direct stimulus to raising pupil achievement.
- Poor attendance is destructive of educational achievement, undermines the wellbeing of each pupil and demoralises staff.
- The LA has a statutory duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education and, if a registered pupil at school, this means attending school regularly and on time.

Objectives

- To promote good attendance as this is vital to educational achievement.
- To convey clearly to parents and pupils that:
 - regular attendance is essential;
 - unauthorised absence and persistent lateness are not acceptable;
 - only the headteacher in the context of the law can approve absence;
 - parental condoned, unjustifiable absence will be investigated and will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- To keep records of attendance which:
 - clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence by pupils;
 - provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of school attendance rates through centrally held statistics.
- To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:
 - responding rapidly to pupil absence;
 - recognising pupils who maintain ‘excellent’, ‘good’ and ‘improving’ attendance records.
- To be sensitive to situations where regular attendance patterns are disrupted by external factors such as family bereavement.

Statutory Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations (which relate to schools and Pupil Referral Units).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that “...the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive full time education suitable to his / her age, aptitude and ability and to any special education needs he / she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise...”

Section 444 further states “...the parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law...”.

Compulsory school age means that children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday and are of compulsory school age until after the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.

An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil or parent belongs.

Absence from school will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- sickness;
- unavoidable medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exceptional family circumstances.

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- shopping;
- haircuts;
- missed bus;
- overslept;
- no uniform;
- looking after siblings or unwell parents;
- minding the house;
- birthdays;
- *holidays or day trips taken in term time (*see Appendix 3).

Parents are asked to make all medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible.

Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

The Welsh Government (WG) Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013 states that LAs are required by law to adhere to the Education Act 1996 section 444 to include Penalty Charge Notices as one of the interventions to promote better school attendance.

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 provide that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Charge Notice. A Penalty Charge Notice is a

financial penalty of up to £120 and may be issued to a parent or carer as a result of a child's regular non-attendance at school or education provision.

Practice and Procedures

Clear systems and procedures will govern response to all pupil absence. The schools will follow the 'Procedures for Non-Attendance' flowchart as agreed by the LA.

The schools adhere to the descriptors:

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 7½ weeks of learning missed	Your child is missing out on a broad and balanced education. You are at risk of prosecution.

The schools encourage good attendance and punctuality by:

- creating a caring and nurturing environment whereby pupils feel safe and appreciated as young adults;
- ensuring that attendance and punctuality are recognised within the whole school reward system for example, early lunch passes and tokens, attendance levels considered before a pupil is eligible for merit trips and trips abroad;
- developing positive relationships with parents and carers and external agencies working with the family or pupil;
- monitoring and evaluating the early intervention strategies adopted by the schools;
- working closely with multi-agency colleagues and the Education Inclusion Service to improve attendance and punctuality;
- monitoring attendance data and trends and reporting this information termly to the Governing Body.

Specific Actions

- The Federation will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and pupils through: the initial transition meeting prior to admission, and also in Year 9 option choice meetings.
- The schools will also communicate the importance of attendance to parents and pupils through assemblies, the school prospectus, newsletters and the schools' websites.
- If no contact is received by the parent or carer of an absent pupil by 9.25 am on the first morning of the absence, a telephone call is made by the school's administration staff to

investigate the reason for the absence. If the school is not able to contact the family then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (N: no reason yet provided for absence).

- Details of the absence are recorded, if later received, and discussed with the headteacher and a decision will be made with regards to authorisation as soon as possible. The headteacher may ask the Education Inclusion Service for advice with regards to this but the decision to authorise any absence remains with the school.
- If the pupil is registered as a Child in Need or on the Child Protection register and absent from school without reason, then the school will contact Social Services as soon as possible.
- If an absence remains unexplained for three consecutive days then the EWO will be informed.
- When a pupil returns to school from an absence, but no explanation is offered, a letter will be sent to the parent.
- A letter will also be sent to the parent if a pupil is persistently late to school.
- Ultimately, if an attendance matter cannot be resolved by the school and the appropriate steps have been followed (as outlined in the 'Procedures for Non-Attendance document'), then a referral will be made to the LA for further investigation.
- A request to the LA for a Penalty Charge Notice can be made by the school, police or from within the LA itself in relation to poor attendance at school. (See Appendix 4 – Penalty Charge Notices)

The school will also:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law relating to school attendance;
- complete school registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session;
- stress to parents and carers the importance of contacting the school as early as possible on the first day of absence;
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence;
- consult with all members of the school's community and LA Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy;
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance by the Governing Body;
- work towards ensuring all pupils are supported and valued and so want to attend school.

The Designated Members of Staff (Appendix 1 and 2)

Attendance is the responsibility of all staff. There is, however, a designated member of staff for attendance matters in each school and all staff are able to discuss individual pupil attendance with this person. The Designated Member of Staff for Attendance:

- monitors the school's registers;
- liaises with teaching staff, in particular Heads of Year and Key Stage leaders;
- meets with the LA Officer on a regular pre-arranged basis;
- refers to other agencies if appropriate;
- refers to the school nurse if there are doubts about the validity of an illness;
- oversees the use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance and requiring parental response;

- arranges for an attendance meeting in the case of repeated, unexplained absences (the school will consider inviting the named governor for attendance to such a meeting);
- ensures that the LA Officer's role is known and understood in school.

Responsibilities of Parents

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

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should:

- a) take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- b) attend parents' evenings and other school events, if possible;
- c) ensure that their child completes their homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- d) be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- e) ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- f) ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;
- g) always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence;
- h) confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- i) avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- j) talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.

Registration

Keeping the registers

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 actually in attendance at school or other agreed educational activity.
- The register should not have missing marks.
- When a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupils should be marked as late but counted as present for the session.
- When a pupil misses registration, they should be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless a medical letter or phone call by parent is received and deemed to be genuine.
- Pupils should not have access to the register.
- The headteacher is the only person who can authorise that a pupil be removed from the register – this can only be done with the agreement of the LA.
- In Llanidloes High School, in addition to twice daily registration in form groups, a class register is taken for every lesson throughout the day. These are checked by the Head of Year to identify possible truancy and any pupil found to have missed a lesson.

Lateness

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parent of a pupil who is persistently late is guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if persistent late arrival is not resolved.

Registration Codes

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Off Site Education
C	Other Authorised Circumstances
D	Dual Registered i.e Present at another school or PRU
E	Excluded (No alternative provision made)
G	Family holiday (Not agreed)
H	Holiday (Agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (Before the registers closed)
M	Medical / Dental Appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Absence (Not covered by other code)
P	Approved Sporting Activity
R	Religious Observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller Absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational Visit or Trip
W	Work experience
Y	Partial or Enforced closure
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
#	School closed to all pupils
Z	Pupils not on roll yet

Designated member of staff with responsibility for monitoring attendance:

Name: Mr Richard Williams

Contact number: 01686 412289

Deputy designated member of staff with responsibility for monitoring attendance:

Name: Mrs Jan Powell

Contact number: 01686 412289

Nominated member of the Governing Body with responsibility for monitoring attendance:

Name: Mr Phyl Davies

Contacts within the Local Authority

The named officer within Powys LA is Mrs Margaret Jones

Contact number: 01686 614052

E-mail: margaret.jones@powys.gov.uk

Designated member of staff with responsibility for monitoring attendance:

Name: Mrs Elen Chennetier
Contact number: 01686 412603

Deputy designated member of staff with responsibility for monitoring attendance:

Name: Mrs Tania Hill
Contact number: 01686 412603

Nominated member of the Governing Body with responsibility for monitoring attendance:

Name: Mr Phyl Davies

Contacts within the Local Authority

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Contact number: 01686 614052
E-mail: Margaret.jones@powys.gov.uk

It is only schools who can decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. The code 'H' is for where a school has agreed to the absence for a child within term time due to a holiday, a 'G' code for when a school decides they are not prepared to authorise a holiday in term time or it is in excess of the agreed time away from school, and 'F' for an agreed Extended family holiday. The All Wales Attendance Framework (2011) with regard to exceptional circumstances where a period of absence is requested over two weeks in a year that each request should be considered individually and the criteria for consideration are listed on page 74.

The Pupil Registration (Wales) Regulations 2010 provide headteachers with a discretionary power to authorise leave for a family holiday during term time where parents seek permission. Save in exceptional circumstances, no more than ten days leave should be granted for this purpose. A maximum of ten days' holiday is authorised per academic year as long as a child's attendance is over 90%.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school and alternative provisions is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. In law, an offence occurs if a parent or carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school or alternative provision and that absence is not authorised by the school.

The LA are committed to the continual raising of achievement of all their pupils. There is an expectation that all its pupils, regardless of their individual circumstances or needs, are able to secure their entitlement to high quality teaching and learning. Regular attendance is therefore critical if all our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to allow children to achieve their full potential during term time at school. Regular attendance also ensures that children are safe and lessens the opportunities to become involved in truanting and associated anti-social activities.

Parents and carers and pupils are supported at a school or alternative education provision level to overcome barriers to regular attendance and through a wide range of assessment and intervention strategies. Sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental cooperation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem. This additional sanction is a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that its use will secure an improvement.

The key criteria for issuing Penalty Charge Notices are as follows:

- when a pupil has a minimum of ten sessions (five school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences during the current term and this brings the overall pupil's attendance to below 90% in the school year (these absences do not have to be consecutive);
- unauthorised absences of at least ten sessions (five school days) due to holidays in term-time if the absences take the overall pupil's 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 ten sessions of late arrival within a term; these do not need to be consecutive but should bring the overall pupil's attendance to under 90% in the school year to date.

It should be noted that Penalty Charge Notices will only be issued by post and never as an instant action.

For further information on Penalty Charge Notices please refer to the Code of Conduct which can be found on:

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/schools-students/school-attendance-welfare/>

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/cy/ysgolion-a-myfyrwyr/school-attendance-welfare/>