



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

Pupil Attendance **at School Handbook**

2017-2020

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of school attendance cannot be understated. School gives lasting friendships, important social skills, opportunities, choices and experiences.

If a child misses school they are likely to;

- have problems keeping up with school work;
- dislike school more;
- obtain poor examination results;
- not achieve to their full potential;
- lose their place in friendship groups and become isolated from peers;
- become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour; and/or
- find difficulty in getting into further education or a job/career.

Merthyr Tydfil is committed in ensuring that all children and young people fulfil their potential – regular attendance at school is one of the biggest factors in achieving this.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this handbook is to promote a consistent message that attendance at school is a key priority in Merthyr Tydfil. It also intends to;

- outline the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in promoting attendance at school;
- provide advice and guidance to schools on effective practices and strategies to improve attendance;
- clarify the role of the Education Inclusion Officer in tackling attendance issues, including case management and prosecution processes; and
- clearly identify links to other policies.

LEGAL CONTEXT

Regular School Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, states that the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age (5-16 years) receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child at home).

If it appears to a Local Authority (LA) that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2000, there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, Section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This offence requires proof that the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed to act. Under this aggravated offence, a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction can lead to a custodial sentence.

ROLE OF PARENTS AND CARERS

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their children attend a registered school. It is also the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school as soon as possible if their child will be absent, and ensure a satisfactory explanation is given to the school.

Parent/carers can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children at school taking the following actions:

- Start good habits early, arrive at school on time and keep to school rules.
- Inform the school on the first day of any illness or absence, providing medical evidence where appropriate
- Make it known that they do not approve of poor attendance, lateness or truancy. Ensure their children only miss school for legally allowed reasons such as illness or days specifically set aside for religious observance.
- Always send in notes to explain an absence.
- Avoid booking family holidays during term time.
- Attend parents' evenings and other school events.
- Read all letters that the child brings home from school.
- Talk to the school or the Education Welfare Service about any problems or difficulties they may be experiencing.
- Support school in encouraging good behaviour in school as well as out of school.
- Take an interest in their child's schoolwork and homework.

SCHOOL LEVEL ACTION

The school is initially responsible for identifying and following up pupil absences. Every school should have an effective and recognised procedure. All pupil absences should be followed up as soon as possible. The action taken, and the responses received, should always be recorded. Please see **Appendix 1** for the Graduated Response.

Registration Practices

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 set out the requirements on schools to maintain admission and attendance registers. Schools must keep two registers: an admission register, which serves as the school roll, and an attendance register. The admission register should include details of pupils from the date they have been admitted to the school.

Attendance registers must be called twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register must show whether each pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. In addition, where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means either the school has given approval in advance, or that a satisfactory explanation has been given afterwards (the absence should be classified as unauthorised until that time). Registers need to be up to date so that schools can account for all pupils particularly in an emergency.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark; and
- day trips and holidays in term time.

Schools are strongly encouraged to challenge the reason for absence and should not readily accept it and automatically mark an absence as *authorised* simply because a parent/carer has contacted the school; medical evidence should be requested where appropriate.

No pupil should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher. **Spaces must not be left in the register. See Appendix 2.**

Lateness

Registers should be closed at an agreed time each day. Welsh Government guidelines suggest 30 minutes after the start of each session. The school will need to determine a constant and consistent arrangement. See **Appendix 3.**

- Where a pupil arrives late but the register is still open the pupil should be marked as late but counted as present for that session. The code to be used is at the discretion of the school.
- Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, he/she should be marked as late but counted as an authorised absence and marked as an 'L'. Good practice would be to insert a comment as to reasons why a pupil is late.
- Where a pupil misses registration (and arrives after registration, without an adequate explanation and the register has closed), the absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence – "U".

For consistency a corporate set of attendance coding is in operation in Merthyr Tydfil, this is attached at **Appendix 4.**

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

National Assembly for Wales Guidance Circular 203/2016 Inclusion and Pupil Support advises that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance, which should be set out in a School Attendance Policy.

The guidance also identifies a list of structures and processes that a school should have in place to deal with attendance issues, which have been used to create the checklist below:

Registering pupils, including the length of time registers should be kept open	<input type="checkbox"/>
Categorising absence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Determining in which exceptional circumstances leave of absence will be granted for holidays taken during term-time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring attendance and punctuality for all lessons	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with late arrivals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with unauthorised absence:	<input type="checkbox"/>
when contact will be made with parents/carers	
• how and when standard letter systems will be used	<input type="checkbox"/>
• what measures will be taken to re-engage disaffected pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>
• what measures will be taken to ensure pupils complete work which has been missed	<input type="checkbox"/>
• what rewards/incentives will be used to encourage attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>
• referring cases to the LA (i.e. when, how and by whom)	<input type="checkbox"/>
• what sanctions will be taken including the circumstances in which the school will consider entering into a parenting contract	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Reintegrating pupils who have been absent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collating and analysing attendance data to identify trends and enable action to be taken	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Guidelines on a Model Attendance Policy are attached at **Appendix 5**).

Effective Practices For Promoting Regular Attendance At School (School Based Initiatives)

Some examples of good practice in schools used to raise the profile of attendance are as follows:

- First day contact;
- Reward assemblies;
- Reward systems such as non-uniform day;
- Certificates for most improved and 100% attendance;
- End of term 'fun' days for pupils with full attendance for that week; and
- Reward trips (primaries) for best attendance.

See **Appendix 6** for a more extensive list on good practice and **Appendix 7** on 'Absconding'.

Management of Data

Sampling weekly attendance at specific sessions may show up regular patterns of non-attendance and may reveal, for example, an association with certain subjects, teachers or teaching groups.

Such analysis can also draw attention to the improvement or deterioration in the attendance of individual pupils. The analysis can help to target intervention more selectively and help to establish the cause of an absence.

All schools hold a great deal of information about attendance which is not always fully used. This information can be of great use in schools for strategic planning and can enable schools to manage attendance issues more effectively. Whole school attendance figures produced monthly, termly or yearly, based on year groups, can indicate factors such as:

- declining attendance in year groupings; and
- the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. inclement weather and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate the:

- effect of staff absenteeism;
- fall in attendance preceding teacher training days, half terms, study leave or work experience;
- effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday;
- effect of activity days, day trips or residential trips; and
- effect of the timing of the school day;

Continuous analysis of individual pupil's attendance and of the whole school can give scope to strategic planning. By identifying those levels which the school considers are indicators of persistent absenteeism or irregular attendance, it will be possible to identify the extent of the problem. The school can then target time provided by the education inclusion officer and pastoral staff more effectively by producing:

- individual attendance records which highlight reasons for absence and the pattern and rate of unauthorised absence; and
- lists of all pupils with unexplained absence which can be fed back to the responsible member of staff.

The pastoral staff will be able to identify those pupils who give cause for concern. Coded absence, broken down into a class and/or group format, would allow identification of excessive unauthorised absences.

Vulnerable Groups

- **Looked After Children** - children and young people may be looked after by the LA for a variety of reasons. Most children are looked after under voluntary arrangements. A minority are subject to care orders. Most children looked after will have been affected by distressing and damaging experiences. They may be living away from home because of family breakdown, abuse or neglect or social need. Nearly all will have to cope with some sense of loss of family, siblings, friends or familiar surroundings. Some may carry feelings of guilt or hidden injuries or may have low self-esteem. All or any of these factors will affect the way these children act. Many children may also be behind in their education. The Audit Commission's 1994 report "*Seen but not Heard*" identified low educational achievements and irregular attendance of children in residential care. It is important, therefore, that these disadvantages are not compounded and that early entry into a local school is facilitated.

- **Traveller Children** - the special position of Traveller families is recognised by Section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996. It protects Traveller parents/carers of no fixed abode from conviction if the parent can demonstrate that:
 - He/she is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as requires him/her to travel from place to place.
 - The child has attended a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits.
 - Where the child has attained the age of six years, he has made at least 200 attendances (i.e. sessions or half days) during the preceding twelve months.

The purpose of this section is not to protect Traveller parents/carers from legal action, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. It is to ensure that children are receiving suitable education when not in school.

In general, the aim should always be to ensure that Traveller children, in common with all other children, attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible – 200 attendances should not be regarded as the norm. A balance has to be found between the need for legal action taken against individual cases, the interests of the child and adopting a sensitive and sympathetic approach that recognises the lifestyle and cultural traditions of the family.

Schools may authorise absence of Traveller children where they are satisfied that a family migrates but gives reasonable indications that it has every intention of returning. This includes Gypsy and other Travellers, circus and fairground families leaving sites and winter quarters, with every expectation that they will return. Some schools in these circumstances are able to maintain contact with the children by outreach work or the provision of distance learning packs, although such activities should not be viewed as a preferable alternative to attendance at school. Some reasonable latitude on absence might also be offered in respect of families who have moved from, or have been evicted from, unauthorised sites while the family finds another site. However, in the latter circumstances, all efforts should be made to encourage the maintenance of attendance at school. Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence should be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

- **English As An Additional Language (EAL)** - parents/carers of children from diverse cultural ethnicities, such as (Polish and Portuguese) families may feel that a school setting is not a safe environment for the child/children. It is critical that all schools recognise and appreciate this cultural diversity and endeavour to recognise any issues that may arise, which may prevent these pupils from accessing suitable education. In addition, many schools can offer bilingual support that is utilised in the classroom setting.

Attendance Target Setting

The Education (School Performance and Unauthorised Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 were introduced under Section 53 of the Education Act 2002, which amended Section 63 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Under these regulations, governing bodies of every maintained school (other than a special school established in a hospital) will be required to set targets for the reduction of all absences at the school.

High expectations are central to the target setting process and to providing the conditions that enable all pupils to realise their potential.

“The greatest danger is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it”.
(Michelangelo)

High expectations are reflected in stretching targets. In setting preliminary targets, senior leaders should assess the degree of challenge required.

All schools should have clear strategies and plans for achieving the stretching targets. These should be integral to the process of school improvement planning. The strategies will be informed by:

- a shared belief that pupils in the school can achieve as well as pupils in the highest performing similar schools;
- a precise understanding of each pupil’s strengths and areas for improvement;
- robust, accurate and regular tracking of each pupil’s progress;
- intervention and support that are closely aligned to individual needs and have a proven record of success;
- the involvement of each pupil in assessing strengths, areas for improvement and in identifying how particular aspects of their learning can be improved - pupils are more likely to make progress if they understand clearly their present levels of achievement, know what they need to do next and are involved in discussing how to improve their work; and
- the involvement of pupils and their parents to develop a shared understanding of the roles they play in achieving the targets.

The Central South Consortium (CSC) will be collecting this data during the Autumn term. The CSC will confirm the timescales for this collection with schools at the end of the summer term before the start of the new academic year. In order to ensure that attendance matters are addressed swiftly it is recommended that a whole school target for attendance is confirmed with the governing body early in the Autumn Term.

Regulations also place a duty on schools to publish within the annual report for every school year the following information:

- Actual absence rate in the relevant school year.
- The absence target (as outlined above).
- A statement setting out the extent to which the actual absence rate met the final target set for the same school year.

Attendance Data

Schools are required to ensure that their data is complete and that there are no missing marks, by no later than the **15th of the month**. For example, data for September should be completed by no later than the 15th October. This will allow the LA to pull the data through Capita and provide schools with comprehensive data packs and analysis. The information required is as follows:

- Group session summary for the month
- Group session summary for the rolling figure – i.e. from the first day of the school year to the end of the current month
- Group analysis by attendance code for the month
- Group analysis by attendance code for the rolling figure (as above)
- Gender for all of the above reports

Early Intervention

The importance of monitoring absenteeism and follow up action by school staff before serious cases are referred to the Inclusion Service cannot be underestimated. Often early intervention at the start of any attendance issues can lead to a swift and positive outcome. Good practice suggests that before a referral is made to another agency schools should first have:

- sent a general absence letter to parents/carers to advise them of falling attendance and offering support;
- spoken to the pupil to see if they have any issues that are making it difficult to attend school, i.e. bullying, curriculum difficulties etc; and
- invited parents/carers to come into school to discuss difficulties and agree any appropriate support packages.

All school level action should be recorded as this will be needed as supporting information for a referral to the education inclusion service should additional support become necessary.

Referral for Additional Support

There are various agencies that schools can refer to for additional support for a pupil if needed, such agencies are:

- Education Inclusion Service
- Behaviour Support Teacher
- Education Child Psychology Service
- Children Social Services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- School Nurse
- School Based Counselling
- Multiple Intervention Assistance (MIA)
- Youth Support
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Llamau
- Merthyr Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service (MIDAS)
- Youth Offending Support
- Inspire to Achieve
- Parenting Team

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION

Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) is a team within Inclusion in the Learning Department. The service provides advice and guidance to all schools on attendance matters. The LA statutory functions are as listed below.

LA Statutory Functions

- Instigate and authorise the prosecution process in conjunction with school
 - Issue "A" and "B" warning letters prior to commencing court action
 - Quality assure prosecution file
 - Sanction file and facilitate legal process
- Administer and monitor the FPN process i.e.

- Issuing FPN warning letters
- Monitor the 15 day monitoring period
- Issue FPN
- Monitor payments of FPNs and progress cases of non-payment to court
- Safeguarding of children in schools as directed in the Children's Act 1989
- Tracking/tracing Children Missing Education (CME)
- Attending and supporting Pupil Disciplinary Committees (PDCs) Exclusion hearings
- Attending and supporting Pupil Disciplinary Committees (PDCs) Exclusion appeals
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Child Employment Licensing
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Child Entertainment Licensing
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Child Chaperone Licensing
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Attendance Orders (AOs)
- Auditing of School Attendance Registers and use of WG codes
- Monitoring of exclusions

Legal action to enforce attendance can only be taken by the LA.

For those schools who have bought into the EWS SLA, the Education Inclusion Officer (EIO) has a dual role to play as a provider of a service to the school and as mediator between home and school. The EIO will undertake attendance improving activities as directed by the Headteacher. Some examples of concerns for school to ask the EIO to become involved are as follows;

- Unresolved attendance problems
- Unexplained absences
- Repeated, condoned absences
- Irregular attendance, whatever the reason
- Emotional/behavioural problems
- Suspected illegal child employment
- Material needs
- Family trauma – pupil distressed, mood swings, sudden changes in character
- Concern over the care and control, health or general wellbeing of a child at home or in the community.
- Pupil is developing a pattern of lateness

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

Legal basis and rationale

New legislation has empowered designated Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) Officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to the parents/carers of children and young people who have unauthorised absence from school on behalf of the Headteacher.

The issuing of FPNs will remain the responsibility of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) in response to requests made by Headteachers and their nominated deputies.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is a legal requirement and essential if pupils are to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Parents/carers and pupils are supported at school and at local authority level to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a range of

assessment and intervention strategies with sanctions of any nature only used where parental cooperation is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

Penalty notices are an added means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for the absence. Only schools, and not the parents/cares, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for the absence is reasonable before doing so. Any absence that is not authorised by the school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure their child's attendance at school and that absence is not authorised by the school. The legislation governing the implementation of FPNs is outlined in the following:

- Sections 444A, and 444B of the Education Act 1996;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013;
- Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (the right to an education).

A penalty notice is a fine of up to £120 which may be issued to a parent/carer as a result of their child's regular non-attendance at school.

The LA is responsible for developing a Code of Conduct within which all partners will operate and as part of the statutory duties for ensuring school attendance, it is appropriate that the EWS will assume this responsibility on behalf of the LA.

MTCBC's EWS investigates cases of irregular attendance from school, and following a period of intervention and support, to resolve a concern for non-attendance will, if deemed appropriate instigate legal action. New legislation bringing FPNs offer a means of swift intervention to prevent individual cases becoming entrenched and progressing to the local magistrate's courts.

Prosecution Process

It is statute that the LA instigates the prosecution process. Overall the process could be completed within four weeks, following the fourth week monitoring period of attendance as instigated with the issuing of an "A" warning letter, however, the more complete and robust the file the quicker the turnaround. There are occasions when cases are put on hold due to requests received from Social Services, because of extenuating reasons that might impact upon the poor attendance. The list below outlines the actions followed during this process as well as the document required. The full details of EWS and School Actions are available in **Appendix 8**.

1. School gathers evidence for file and writes statement.
2. School submits hardcopy of file and submits statement electronically to LA EWS. See checklist below:
3. LA EWS checks evidence file for compliance.
4. LA EWS submits statement electronically to LA Legal Department.
5. LA Legal Department checks statement for accuracy and compliance and sends back to LA EWS with any amendments.

6. LA EWS sends statement back to school to amend if necessary and to sign.
7. School makes amendments, signs the statement and sends it back to LA EWS.
8. LA EWS sends statement and evidence file to the LA Legal Department.
9. LA Legal Department sends the file to court. Court returns the file in approx. five days together with a date for court.
10. LA Legal Department delivers the summons to the defendant allowing a minimum of 7 days' notice prior to court appearance.

School is not usually required to attend court.

LA PROFORMA FOR COMPLIANCE

School name:.....

School staff name:.....

Date received by LA:.....

Date returned by LA:.....

Document name	Submitted	Not submitted	Comments and dates
Section 9 statement using template			
Section 9 statement by EWS if required			
Dates of warning letters and copies of letters			
Dates of non-attendance and monitoring period			
Date of FPN			
Court warning letters (A)			
Court warning letters (B)			
Registration certificate			
Narrative/context of the individual for more complex cases			
Details of contact made with family- phone calls, letters, home visits etc			
Is there sufficient evidence to secure a realistic prospect of conviction?			
Is the prosecution in the public interest?			

Management of Data

The Inclusion Team will provide schools and chairs of governors with monthly data packs and suggested actions to improve attendance in order to assist in the targeting of resources.

GRADUATED RESPONSE GUIDANCE

Attendance	Non-Attendance	Poor Punctuality
<p>100% - 90% School Action</p>	<p>School's actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect parent/carer to make telephone contact with School on first day of absence • make telephone contact with parent/carer on first day of absence where necessary • generate a 'reason for absence' letter when there is failure to contact; where necessary requesting medical evidence to support continuing 'illness' absences • invite parent/carer in for an interview • issue 'Callio' 'Green Letter' to parents for children with attendance percentages of above 96% • engage FLO to work with pupils and families • undertake a home visit • consider the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in respect of unauthorised absences exceeding five days per term- contact EWS • consider referral to MIA; • issue 'Callio' 'Amber Letter' to parents for children with attendance percentages between 92% and 96% and continue to monitor • issue 'Callio' 'Red Letter' to parents for children with attendance percentages below 92% and continue to monitor <p>Reference - Welsh Government's All Wales Attendance Framework</p> <p>Alerts Where schools have identified pupils with attendance absence 'patterns' from 90% and below and where the strategies utilised by the school have not brought about improvements, then alerts to be discussed with EWS in order to provide advice and guidance on actions.</p>	<p>School's actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue letter to parent/carer • invite parent/carer in for an interview • engage FLO to work with pupils and families • consider the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in respect of high levels of unpunctuality - contact EWS • contact via phone calls • undertake a home visit • make a referral to MIA • carry out a lateness patrol <p>Alerts Where schools have identified pupils with high levels of poor punctuality and where the strategies utilised by the school have not brought about improvements, then alerts to be discussed with EWS in order to provide advice and guidance on actions.</p>

Attendance	Non-Attendance	Poor Punctuality
90% - below School Action Plus	<p>School actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with EWS pupils whose attendance is 90% or below and is a cause of concern. Discuss reasons for absence e.g. health • Agree actions to be undertaken by EWS, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue an FPN • send an A letter <p>NB- continue to liaise with EWS if attendance continues to decline</p> <p>Having made a home visit if no contact has been made with the child or parent/carer then</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm if either MIA or Social Services are involved and request their support. Please note that any child on the CP register if absent for two consecutive days school should notify Social Services. 2. Contact the Police on 101 requesting a Welfare Check 	<p>School actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with EWS pupils whose punctuality continues to cause concern • Agree actions to be undertaken by EIO, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue an FPN
85% and below	<p>EWS to issue B notice; SEWO and or AIO to advise in respect of commencing Court Action. Time scale between A notice and B notice and B notice and court action should be 10 – 15 school days depending on the individual case.</p> <p><u>Evidence required for case to proceed to prosecution</u></p> <p><u>School to provide-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological contact record of actions taken e.g. phone calls, letters, home visits meetings arranged with family etc • Medical evidence <p><u>EWS to provide-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of A and B Warning Letters • Advice with regards to writing a statement 	

Contact details for EWS

Senior Education Welfare Officer- Adele Stacey- 01685 724681
 Attendance Inclusion Officer- Mia Bounds-01685 725067
 Attendance Inclusion Officer Sarah Friel- 01685 724607

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Accurate recording of attendance codes is essential to ensure the safety of all pupils and meet legal requirements.
- 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 afternoon registration must take place at the start or during the afternoon session, not at the end of the morning session or during the break between sessions. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance.
- All staff involved with the registration process should be made aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in approved educational activities off site, absent or not required to attend. Where a pupil is of compulsory school age, the register must show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised.
- Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for absence. Only schools, and not parents/carers, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so. Any absence that is not authorised by the school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Registration procedures need to be clearly outlined in the school's attendance policy and repeated in the staff handbook.

Attendances codes are grouped under five statistical categories as noted in the table below.

Statistical category	Notes
Present	
Approved educational activity	(Treated as present)
Authorised absence	By law only a school can approve absence, not parents/carers.
Unauthorised absence	Absent without the permission of the school.
Not required to attend	Pupils who have not attained the age of five at the start of the term in which the session takes place or were 16 years before the start of the school year in which it takes place.

It is important that:

- all staff have a general understanding of when each code may be used and its statistical meaning;
- staff responsible for entering codes should have a thorough understanding of the issues regarding attendance;
- staff should also be aware of when and to whom they should refer instances of absence in accordance with school guidelines;
- clear guidance also needs to be given on what constitutes 'other authorised circumstances' so that a consistent approach is maintained across the school;
- careful use of codes is paramount to avoid safeguarding issues arising, e.g. where pupils attend education other than at school (EOTAS) provision.

School attendance codes

- The 2010 guidance on school attendance codes provides assistance to schools (including independent schools) and local authorities in the use of codes to record pupil attendance and absence in schools. It relates to attendance at statutory morning and afternoon registration as schools are required to be open to pupils for 190 days in an academic year or 380 sessions.
- Electronic systems support a more consistent approach to collecting school attendance data across Wales, allowing greater potential for exploring further the reasons why pupils are absent, improving the safeguarding and tracking of pupils and in turn putting in place strategies to deal effectively with specific problems.
- The use of fixed codes assists schools, local authorities and Welsh Government in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school. They can use this information to formulate interventions to address deteriorating attendance, poor attendance, persistent absence and other issues that the data reveals. Education welfare officers (EWOs) should investigate and challenge variations in the use of attendance codes.
- Estyn has identified that schools that have both quality assurance procedures in place (with a member of the senior management team responsible for overseeing the coding of attendance) and good systems in place to analyse data are able to adapt their approaches to improve attendance.
- The guidance may be used in conjunction with systems to record attendance in lesson-by-lesson systems, but schools may find that they need to record other reasons in this type of system. However, in schools where such systems are used and the first lesson in the morning or any session in the afternoon is used to substitute for the morning and afternoon registration, the codes in this guidance must be used for those sessions.

Computerised registers

- Schools may use computers to maintain attendance and admission registers but, in common with manual registers, if the computer package allows, the appropriate change to the original entry in a register and any subsequent correction must be clearly distinguishable. The original entry must not be replaced by the corrected entry. Both the original entry and the correction should be preserved so that, on retrieval, the entries appear in chronological order. Prints of the register must clearly distinguish between the original entry and the corrected entry.
- Schools using computers for attendance registration must make a hard copy of the attendance register at least once a month. As soon as practicable after the end of the school year the printed sheets must be bound into annual volumes and, as with manual registers, retained for a period of not less than four years after the end of the school year to which each volume relates. This would mean that Year 11 pupils would have attendance records from Year 7. Electronic records should be readily accessible to authorised officers, such as EWOs, to allow easy checking of individual pupils' attendance patterns

LATENESS

Registration Code: U	
Brief Description	Late (after registration closed)
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Late for session
Use	Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

Additional useful information

This code should be used when a pupil has arrived after the close of registration with no relevant reason to code it otherwise.

Example:

- a. If a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) due to a doctor or dentist appointment, the code M would be used.
- b. If a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) because they couldn't find their shoes/their school uniform was drying in the tumble dryer/their younger sibling was playing up etc, the code U would be used.

The Assembly Government advises that schools should close the register to pupils **30 minutes after the start of the session**. It also advises schools against leaving the register open for the whole session (see Code L and Code U).

Schools and LAs have asked if all schools could have an agreed time for the close of registration. This is not possible due to the individual needs of each school and a school's power to set different session times for different pupils (see below).

For health and safety reasons, schools need to be aware of where pupils are, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session. This might be achieved through a paper system in the school office to record that a pupil has arrived on the school premises during the session. "Lesson monitoring" can also help with this process.

Under the School Day and School Year Regulations, schools can set different session times for different pupils, such as during public examinations and setting different lesson times for pupils in exclusions units. However, they must have regard to the Assembly Government advice on the minimum taught time for pupils and the requirement to offer 380 sessions. Where schools set different session times, they should close the register 30 minutes after the register was called for that group of pupils. For example, if the main school day started at 8.30am but the exclusion unit started at 9.30am:

- the register for the main school should close at 9.00am; and
- the register for the exclusion unit will close at 10.00am.

(See also Code L)

For safeguarding and educational reasons, schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner, such as through “First Day Calling” procedures.

Registration Code: L	
Brief Description	Late (before registers closed)
Statistical Meaning	Present
Legal Meaning	Present
Physical Meaning	Late for session
Use	Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

GUIDANCE ON CODES

The recommended codes are grouped under the following five statistical categories:

- present;
- approved educational activity (treated as present);
- authorised absence;
- unauthorised absence;
- not required to attend.

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
∧	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity
J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	authorised absence
I	Illness	authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	authorised absence
S	Study leave	authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	unauthorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	unauthorised absence
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	not required to attend
Y	Partial and forced closure	not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	not required to attend

Guidance on the use of Welsh Governments 'B' and 'D' codes - August 2014

Purpose

The aim of this guidance is to

- provide assistance to schools in the accurate use of the 'B' and 'D' codes
- enable schools to record accurately pupil attendance and absence
- ensure a consistent approach across the LA.

The guidance applies to recording attendance at both statutory registration sessions i.e. morning and afternoon. Regular and punctual attendance is vital for all pupils for educational and safeguarding reasons and any signs of disengagement need to be highlighted and addressed promptly. The correct use of codes enables schools and LA officers to monitor attendance effectively.

LA Role

Attendance data will continue to be monitored and analysed by the Education Welfare Service on a monthly basis. This will include in depth analysis of the use of the 'B' and 'D' codes. Overall findings will be sent to schools. Audits will be undertaken each term in each school. A written audit report will be provided for each school in order for the Headteacher to ensure the appropriate coding and marking of registers and for corrections to be made where appropriate. Should it be found that a school does not apply the registration codes correctly then it would result in the following actions;

- The written audit report will be sent to the Chair of Governors and to the Chief Education Officer.
- The Chief Education Officer may call for an investigation, the outcomes of which would be reported to the LA's Scrutiny Committee.

Overview

There are three categories of code

- Approved Educational Activity i.e. child is **present**
- Authorised absence
- Unauthorised absence

For a child to be counted as attending school the approved educational activity must be **supervised**. Schools may wish to provide work for children to undertake while not at school and this can have some benefits. However as the activity is not supervised the child must be recorded as absent - authorised or unauthorised. Please refer to notes later in the document under 'When **not** to use the B code'.

Registration Code: B Statistical Category: Approved Educational Activity

The information below is drawn from the Welsh Guidance June 2010. The key aspect is that the 'B' code applies where the pupil is **supervised**.

Registration Code: B	
Brief Description	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Legal Meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Where a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off-site at a supervised activity approved by the school.

For educational and safeguarding reasons, schools must ensure that they update their attendance records in line with those sent to them by the provider of an alternative off site activity so that any absences by individual pupils can be monitored and addressed accordingly.

Approved Educational Activity must be **supervised by someone approved** by the school. It must also take place during the session for which the mark is recorded. This code must not be used when pupils are attending alternative provision on the school's premises.

Examples of when this code would be used are:

- attending taster days at other schools;
- pupils attending another school as 'guest pupils' (note a pupil who attends another school as part of a regular pattern must be dual registered – see Code D);
- pupils attending vocational courses at college;
- pupils attending alternative provision arranged and or agreed by the school;
- pupils undertaking work experience as part of an alternative curriculum or alternative provision (pupils undertaking work experience under section 560 of the Education Act 1996 should be recorded under Code W);
- Special tuition is provided for pupils with longer term health problems which prevent them from attending school. However, it should be noted that the attendance of these pupils should reflect that as provided by the LA.

When **not** to use the B code

- Schools should not use this code if a pupil has an agreed **part-time timetable** as part of reintegration or transition. The school are authorising the absence for the sessions that the pupil is not required to be in school and the pupil should be recorded as **Code C** for those sessions. Whilst part-time timetables are a useful technique to help pupils adapt or re-adapt to the school setting, they have the effect of reducing the sessions on offer to those pupils to under the minimum 380 sessions and therefore should be used as a short term measure only.
- Schools should not use this code to record **study leave**. Study leave is unsupervised time away from school for pupils to prepare for their public examinations and many pupils treat such time as extra holidays and do no study. Study leave is unsupervised and schools cannot assume that it took place during the school session; pupils should be recorded as **Code S**.
- Schools should **not** use this code when children are **not in school** and have been provided with work e.g. work packs. The school must use the appropriate code when children are not in school i.e.
 - **C** - Other authorised exceptional circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
 - **I** - Illness
 - **E** - Excluded but no alternative provision made
 - **N** - No reason for the absence provided yet
 - **O** - Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)

Statistical Category – Dual registered – (attending two Registered Educational Establishments)

Registration Code: D	
Brief Description	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending another Registered Educational Establishment)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Legal Meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. Where a pupil is dually registered at institution X and Y, institution X marks the pupil approved educational activity while they are attending institution Y and vice-versa. Both institutions share responsibility for the child. Failure to attend either institution at the proper time without good reason is unauthorised absence.

Additional useful information

This code is to be used when a pupil is dually registered at two schools or registered provisions and, for the session in question, they are not required to attend your school. The school where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and pursuing non-attendance.

This code can be used for Traveller children when it is known that:

- they are attending another school; **and**
- are dually registered at both schools.

Schools/registered provisions should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the 'host' school and alternate school/registered provision where the pupil is scheduled to attend, update in respect of any absences so that both schools can record accurately the pupil's absence using the relevant code.

For safeguarding and educational reasons, the school in which the pupil is expected to attend that session must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences.

Statistical Category: Authorised Absence

Registration Code: C	
Brief Description	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Special occasions at the discretion of the school

Additional useful information

(These examples are illustrative and not meant to be exhaustive.)

Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- the nature of the event for which leave is sought;

- its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?);
- whether the parent gave advance notice; and
- the pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Examples might include special occasions such as attending the wedding of a family member, family bereavement, and prison visits.

Public Performances

Where a pupil is absent because they are taking part in a public performance, it is still the school which decides whether to authorise the absence, even if the pupil is being employed under a licence issued by a local authority.

Young Carers

In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school should set a time limit for the absence and set some school work so the pupil does not fall behind while at home.

Birth of a Child

- Support should be directed to keeping the pupil in school wherever possible, and to return her to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth.
- A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorized.

At the request of the school

A pupil has been placed on an agreed part-time timetable e.g. as part of a staggered intake or reintegration package.

Registration Code: F	
Brief Description	Extended Family Holiday (agreed)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term time. They must apply for leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress. Schools should invite parents to discuss any proposed holiday in term time. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances. Pupils who fail to return to school within 10 days of the end of extended leave of absence may be deleted if both the school and LA fail to locate them and they do not have good reason to be absent.

Additional useful information:

This category is for the whole of an extended holiday where the Headteacher has agreed there are exceptional circumstances.

A pupil who takes 10 days holiday (whether authorised or not) in an academic year will only attain **94.7%** attendance (for primary schools). A pupil who takes 10 days holiday during the period of September – May (the annual Assembly Government absence survey time period) will only attain **93.8%** (for secondary schools).

If a school agrees absence and the pupil goes on holiday for 10 days or fewer, absence is authorised (use **Code H**). If the parents do not apply for the leave of absence in advance of taking it the pupil must be recorded as unauthorised absence using **Code G**. If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised (**Code G**). If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised (**Code G**).

By adopting a unified approach to discouraging holidays taken during term time it is hoped that it will continue to raise your attendance.

As of January 1st 2015 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) can be issued, at the discretion of the Headteacher, for a period of unauthorised absence, some of which may include unauthorised holidays.

We believe that a common approach will prove supportive for Headteachers in respect of the authorising of holidays and absences in general during term time. As Headteachers have the discretion to authorise holidays in exceptional circumstances, it was felt that it would be beneficial to identify what these exceptional circumstances might be for your information. This was done in consultation with the schools on the Primary Attendance Group.

The following examples for granting an absence for exceptional circumstances can be utilised as illustrative guidance;

- a bereavement of a close family member
- to visit a close family member who is terminally ill
- a prison visit for a close member of the family
- for those whose holidays are governed by strict working timetables e.g. Service Personnel and at times the Police (e.g. when leave was cancelled due to NATO)
- those who have to adhere to “workers fortnight”
- for the wedding of an immediate family member

As always holidays are granted at the discretion of the Headteacher, however, whether authorised or not these are still absences and therefore should only be granted for exceptional circumstances and be based upon the knowledge of the individual case.

The information below illustrates which code should be used.

Registration Code: G	
Brief Description	Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	<p>Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time and must apply for the leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress. Schools should invite parents in to school to discuss any proposed holiday in term time.</p> <p>Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances.</p>

Registration Code: H	
Brief Description	Family Holiday (agreed)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	<p>Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time and parents must apply for the leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress; and whether circumstances warrant it. Schools should invite parents to discuss any proposed holiday in term time. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances.</p>

Registration Code: M	
Brief Description	Medical/Dental appointments
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence. Parents and pupils should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Sight of an appointment card is advisable if a pupil is an irregular attender. If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, no absence need be recorded for that session. Schools should keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency. A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'.

Additional useful information

For Health and Safety reasons a system must be in place to record that a pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during the session. Medical appointments include:

- attendance at a GP's surgery;
- attendance at a dentist's surgery; and
- hospital appointments (not a stay in hospital, for which Code I should be used).

Registration Code: V	
Brief Description	Educational visit or trip
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Legal Meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	School organised trips and visits, including residential trips. Can also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by other organisations, provided they are supervised.

Additional useful information

Approved Educational Activity must be supervised by someone approved by the school. It must also take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Registration Code: Y	
Brief Description	Forced and Partial Closure
Statistical Meaning	Not counted in possible attendances
Legal Meaning	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or not attending because the pupils have a different school year to other pupils in the school.
Physical Meaning	Not required to be in school
Use	Where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause or the transport provided by the school or local authority for pupils (who do not live with walking distance) is not available. Or where the school has different term dates for different groups of pupils.

Closed due to unavoidable cause

For the purposes of recording attendance and absence, “official transport” is that arranged and funded by the school or local authority such as dedicated buses, taxis and public transport passes.

Examples include:

- road conditions make some roads impassable with the result that the school bus or taxi can only collect some of the pupils;
- public transport not available to those issued with passes due to major incident;
- burst boiler;
- floods; and damage.

GUIDELINES FOR MODEL POLICY

Schools are required to develop a whole school policy on attendance in discussion with staff, the Governing Body, parents and pupils, taking account of Welsh Assembly Government's guidance on Inclusion and Pupil Support, and good practice identified by the Local Authority. A whole school approach to attendance should be adopted reflecting the importance of early intervention, and this policy should:

- give a high priority to attendance and punctuality, ensuring compliance with all statutory requirements;
- promote the importance of attendance to pupils through school assemblies; competitions, incentives, displays, peer mentoring, role models and other restorative approaches;
- set a whole school target for attendance;
- consider the setting of targets for individuals, classes and year group;
- develop attendance incentive schemes which recognise pupils' attendance achievements;
- identify a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance; track and monitor attendance patterns;
- monitor post-registration truancy through the taking of class registers and spot checks;
- identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism / lateness;
- establish procedures for identifying and reintegrating long-term absentees;
- provide clear guidance to staff on the process of registration and on the appropriate coding of absences; making provision for first day response in respect of absences and contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absences and lateness;
- stress to parents the importance of the continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time. (Authorising of leave for term time holidays remains at the discretion of the Headteacher).
- use opportunities such as parents' evenings and the school prospectus/brochure to remind parents of the school policy on attendance, e.g. Callio;
- ensure that all reasonable steps are taken by the school before an appropriate referral is made to the EIO;
- provide for regular structured meetings between staff responsible for school attendance and the EIO.

(Name of School)

(Name of Policy)

Date Agreed: _____

Next Review: _____

**Co-ordinator
(if applicable):** _____

Signature: _____
(Chairperson)

Introduction

Why regular attendance is important

The role of the parent/care in promoting regular attendance and the support available from the school

Named person with responsibility for attendance within the school

Understanding types of absence

Authorised absences

Unauthorised absences (*see page x of the LA attendance handbook for further details*)

Absence procedures

Set out what parents/carers need to do when their child is absent, e.g. phone to notify the school,

Set out what the school will do when the child is absent, e.g. first day contact.

Lateness

Stress importance of punctuality

Set out the times for the school, e.g.

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by **8.55am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Holidays during term time

Set out the factors that will need to be considered when granting leave of absence for holidays during term time.

Set out the process for parents to apply for holidays during term time, including any standard forms, letters and period of notice

What will happen if leave is taken without authorisation, E.G. the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Education Inclusion Service

Who is the officer for the school?

Set out the circumstances in which referrals will be made to the EWO

Contact details

School projects and initiatives to raise attendance

What the school will do to promote regular attendance, e.g.

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in your regular home – school bulletin.
- Report to parents/carers at least half termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

(For more information please see page x of the LA attendance handbook)

School attendance data and targets

Set out what the school does to monitor data.

It would be useful to include some previous data on performance, e.g. as provided in the EIO governing body reports.

Set out what the school's attendance target is, e.g.

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Our target for xxx is to achieve xx% attendance.

Headteacher

Chair of Governors

Chair of School Council

GOOD PRACTICE FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

1. Key issues raised from the Attendance Audit

Having received responses from three out of four secondary schools and 18 out of 22 primary schools the following trends with regards to non-attendance have been noted based upon the data for 2015/16; Apparent sickness continues to be the greatest reason for absence accounting for 3.70% of absence for primary schools and 4.07% for secondary schools.

- Attendance for boys is lightly lower than that for girls in both primary and secondary
- Rates of absence for persistent absentees fluctuates greatly between schools
- In both primary and secondary schools the attendance of pupil eligible for FSMs is lower than that nationally.
- Attendance at the end of term tends to dwindle
- Inconsistency in respect of issuing FPNs
- Pupils in year 1 have the lowest rate of attendance for primary schools, while year 4 pupils have the highest

2. Strategies being trialled in Merthyr schools

As with any approach these are most effective when implemented consistently as a whole school

- Attendance included SDP as a target
- Have a designated member of staff responsible for attendance
- Carry out timely First Day Response actions
- Routinely request medical evidence
- Challenging absences and setting expectations for return to school date
- Close monitoring and analysis of data
- Address attendance at higher threshold i.e. 95-90%
- Make home visits and invite parents in to discuss attendance
- High visible praise of good attendance
- Weekly awards; shorter periods proved to be more effective for those harder to reach
- Rewards for staff & students
- Pupil engagement e.g. Pupil Attendance Champion and/or Committee
- Timetables for the end of term shared with pupils and parents
- Internal competitions e.g. between classes
- All staff being aware of their role in respect of attendance
- Use every opportunity to raise the profile of attendance e.g. Discos & school fetes
- Individual target plans – agree short but achievable actions with parents
- Show parents what their child's attendance as a percentage equates to as days lost
- Send Callio type letters to parents
- Wellbeing wall- names and photos of pupils for whom attendance is an issue
- Information sent to parents - Newsletters, website, text etc.
- Involvement of governors and PTA in attendance
- Unauthorise absences if dissatisfied with reason given, or when no reason is given for an absence, so that a FPN warning letter can be sent at the earliest opportunity
- Agree an approach to the issuing of FPNs as a cluster of schools for consistency
- Clear times given to parents for the registration period
- Walk the mile in the morning

- Walk to school bus
- Encourage breakfast club or pre-school day activities
- Engagement with the local community in supporting school attendance

3. Strategies of effective practice as identified by Estyn in the thematic report “Effective practice in improving attendance in primary schools”

The following strategies have been identified as good practice in improving attendance and would recommend that these be trialled in schools with their effectiveness monitored.

- **The “5 full weeks” initiative**

St Monica’s Primary School in Cardiff uses a number of innovative and effective reward programmes to highlight attendance and to engage pupils.

- ✓ **The ‘5 full weeks’ initiative** rewards pupils who attend school for five weeks with no absence during one term. **This is effective as even if a pupil misses one day, then they are still able to get a reward as they start their five weeks again.**
- ✓ The school holds raffles on random days where each child in attendance on that day receives a raffle ticket, which gives them a chance to win stationery.
- ✓ The award of a ‘green certificate’ (in line with the traffic-light system) for pupils with over 95% attendance encourages those with only a few days of absence.

Results from the ‘5 whole weeks’ campaign demonstrate an increasing number of pupils with full attendance for the five weeks:

- ✓ 38% of pupils with full attendance in the five weeks in the autumn term
- ✓ 62% of pupils with full attendance in the five weeks in the spring term
- ✓ 75% of pupils with full attendance in the five weeks in the summer

- **Pupil engagement “learning squad”**

Pupil involvement at Herbert Thompson Primary School, Cardiff

School leaders identified that absences for holidays during term time were not significant, but absence due to illness was a major contributor to weak attendance rates overall.

Strategy

The school developed a wide range of strategies to improve attendance that included:

- ✓ engaging parents more fully in the life of the school
- ✓ improving support mechanism for parents
- ✓ improving the way the school responds to the pupil voice and the role pupils play in improving attendance
- ✓ developing a clear whole-school structure for managing attendance
- ✓ improving information for parents on attendance, including a clear and easily understood policy

Attendance has been a priority in the school improvement plan for most of the last five years and remains in the plan even though attendance rates place the school in the top 25% or top 50% when compared with similar schools.

The school has developed a ‘learning squad’ comprised of Year 5 pupils who act as pupil representatives to support school leaders with school improvement. Two of the squad support the drive to improve attendance. Each term, these pupils work with around 20 pupils that the school identifies as needing to improve their attendance.

Action

Each morning, the learning squad visits the 20 pupils during registration and gives them a sticker if they are present. They aim to encourage these pupils to have full attendance for the week. If successful, they are able to attend a Friday lunchtime club, specifically set up for them.

The club is organised and run by senior staff and the learning squad. Twice each half-term, the learning squad and targeted pupils decide what activities they would like to undertake in their club, for example art and craft. Pupils may also choose to act as play leaders for pupils in the Reception class during club time.

Actions taken also include:

- ✓ having a weekly focus in morning briefings on attendance, which allows teachers to discuss individual pupils and to identify any support or challenge that they may require
- ✓ sending out attendance leaflets every half-term to all parents reminding them of the school’s attendance targets and the importance of attendance
- ✓ making attendance information easy for parents to understand by giving parents their child’s individual attendance rate but also using a traffic light system to show parents whether the level of attendance is good enough or not
- ✓ monitoring by the deputy Headteacher, in the role of the school’s inclusion leader, when pupils’ attendance falls below 90% making sure that all teachers have a learning review with the inclusion leader each term which also focuses on individual pupils’ attendance
- ✓ establishing an attendance tracker where actions for individual pupils are monitored carefully by the inclusion leader

The school has established a **parents’ council**, made up of two parents from each year group. They form a support network for parents and are at the school on a daily basis. Individuals can approach them to ask for help or discuss issues. One of their goals is to improve attendance.

Impact

The school’s detailed tracking of pupils shows that their strategies have helped to make a measurable and significant impact on improving the attendance of identified pupils. For example, in one term, the school targeted 32 pupils with attendance of below 80% (half with attendance of less than 75%). Of these, 29 improved their attendance notably. Twelve pupils (over a third) achieved attendance of over 90% and eight pupils (a quarter) had attendance of over 95%. Four pupils achieved 100% attendance for the term. The average improvement in attendance was 17 percentage points. The impact of all the school’s strategies on whole-school attendance has been to lift the school into the top 25% or higher 50% when compared with similar schools.

- **“Extra play”** initiative as used in neighbouring LAs

Strategy

Visits having been undertaken to other LA’s, in respect of ‘Good Practice’ in relation to primary attendance a ‘reward package’ of **“Extra play”** has been identified, which is proving to be effective. It costs nothing, and is improving school attendance levels across the authorities’ primary schools.

Pupils in each class are encouraged to improve their attendance, and peer pressure amongst the class is found to be more productive than other forms of 'support' or encouragement.

Each week a **high profile attendance assembly highlights the attendance of each class**, this being in the form of a presentation in front of the whole school for 5th place' up to 1st place'; these being given praise and ovation, and reward trophy (which all schools already have). Additionally the reward for the 'best attending class' is having **an extra 10 minutes at break/lunchtime in the playground each day** for the commencing week. This emphasises to the remaining classes that the best attendees stay out to play when the remaining classes go back in; this has been found to promote better attendance in all schools that are utilising it.

Obviously those pupils with genuine issues that may stop them regularly attending are removed statistically from the class attendance, so as not to discriminate the remaining class members.

GUIDANCE AND EXEMPLAR POLICY ON ABSCONDING

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a child abscond from school.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Member of staff to inform "On Call" member of SLT, pastoral office and main office.
- "On Call" member organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
- If the pupil is not found then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- School office to phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
- School office to contact parents/carers and Social Services if involved, to inform them of the situation.
- Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on staff's knowledge of the child and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the child's best interests.
- Any staff who leaves school grounds to take mobile phone to contact school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and what support the pupil will need in the future.
- A written report will be filed on the incident.
- Member of SLT to brief police and parents.

Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.
- If a student deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the **Positive Behaviour Management Guidance** with reference to holding the student, if appropriate.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.
- If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the school the school office and SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
- Staff will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view, **but not chase**.
- The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.

- The school office will contact the student's parents/carers.
- If in the searching staff lose sight of the student they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing.

If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the student, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident which led to the pupil absconding, the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes. If the student returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon his or her return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the SLT so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions. A written report will be filed on the incident.

Example School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds

Staff member informs SLT / Head that pupil is possibly missing / absconding

Staff check location of pupil / if pupil still on premises by:

- Asking office staff to check CCTV
- Staff check last known location, known hiding points / calm down areas / areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding
- Staff members man any points of easy exit from school grounds / building whilst others sweep building / grounds systematically (add specifics here for your site e.g. one end to other, first to ground floor, outside edges of playground to middle)

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving the premises

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

Staff leave premises to search / follow if safe to do so

Pupil deliberately absconded

Pupil accidentally lost / misplaced

- Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact
- Staff inform the police

- SLT and other staff informed

Pupil is found

Pupil refuses to come in / go to Head

Pupil comes in / goes to Head

- *Parents, pupil and police (if appropriate) attend school to discuss the matter. This should be done as soon as possible.*

- Keep watch from discrete distance (if applicable)
- Call parents
- Pupil and parent discuss matter with Head

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt. Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes.

Guidance on Dealing with Children who Abscond - 2017

Introduction

Under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in common law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care toward their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times through the school day and during school led activities. The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a framework for schools to develop their individual policy and procedures for dealing with pupils who abscond.

Definition

To abscond is to “leave without permission”.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Internal absconding – where the pupil leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site.	External Absconding – where a pupil leaves the school site without permission.
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission. e.g. curriculum swimming, alternate education provision, etc.
Where the pupil leaves a club, run on behalf of the school, without permission but remains on site.	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission. e.g. when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit.
	Where the pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission. e.g. transport between split sites, to and from specialist provision.

Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

In order to prevent a child from absconding from the site, a school should consider the following measures. These are suggested control measures and each school would have to consider which are suitable for their provision.

Site Security

- The site should have a secure perimeter and gates which can be locked.
- Gates/doors should be secured outside of your stated drop off and pick up times.
- Unsecured gates should be locked during break times if there is a significant risk of absconding.
- Doors into school should be locked from the outside with key coded access or similar.

Effective Supervision

- Effective supervision is dependent on a number of factors including
 - Age of the pupils
 - Ability of the pupils
 - Number of the pupils
 - Activities being undertaken
 - Pupil behaviour
 - Site layout and security
 - Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through School grounds, building work etc.

- Schools should mark on a plan of the school where supervisors should be placed.
- Regular head counts should take place through the school day.
- Ensure there is a robust system in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents, especially in Early Years and KS1.
- Ensure there is a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day e.g. lunchtimes, medical appointments.
- Ensure there is a clear system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs.

Actions to be taken in the event of a child absconding

Due to large variation in school settings it would not be practical to produce a definitive flowchart of actions that could be utilised by all provisions. Any action taken must be proportionate to the risk and in the best interest of the child. Schools should draw up their own written policy on pupils absconding, and this must encompass the points below.

- A system for notifying SLT immediately. This system must NOT place the remaining pupils at risk.
- A procedure for securing and systematically searching the site in the event of a child absconding and their whereabouts being unknown.
- A system for notifying the parents / carers, Social Services (if involved) and the Police if a child is known to have left the school site, or they cannot be found.
- Follow up actions to be taken once a child has been found. These should include a written record of the incident.
- The system above should cover educational visits and transport where relevant.

The School policy must not state that pupils will **never** be followed out of school as this could put staff in a position where they have neglected their duty of care. However, neither should they **chase** the pupil. The decision on whether or not to follow a child out of school or initiate a search out of school should be made in consultation with SLT and should be based on a dynamic risk assessment.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to use reasonable physical interventions to prevent a child from putting themselves at risk. Schools should already have a care and control policy in place in respect of physical intervention, which will provide more detail. Termly returns for such incidents are to be sent to the Inclusion Manager in the LA.