



St Aidan's Church in Wales VA School



Attendance Policy



DESIGNATED STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

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DEPUTY STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE AT THE SCHOOL

NAME: Mrs Sarah James

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NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BODY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

NAME: Mrs Helen Coleman

Contacts within the Local Authority

The named officer within Pembrokeshire LA is Natalie Hobbs

Head of Performance and Community – James White

Team Leader for Attendance – Cara Higgins

Pupil Support Officer for Haverfordwest High VC Cluster – Natalie Hobbs



Rationale

- This policy has its basis in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe that all young people have the right to education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.
- We are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take attendance registers twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education.

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

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

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

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

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, every case is different and we will always try to support families to improve the situation. By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves at least over 96 %, whilst our expectation is that our pupils will be in school 100% of the time.



Role of the Pupil Support Service

The PSS provides support to schools, pupils and parents to ensure regular attendance and address problems relating to absenteeism. The Service liaises with other agencies and provides an important link between home and school helping parents and teachers to work in partnership in order that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available locally.

Working with schools

The PSO has a dual role to play as a provider of a service to the school and as mediator between home and school. Natalie Hobbs is our PSO and she has a duty to visit the school regularly.

The main role of the PSS is to:

- contribute to the local authority and school's drive for school effectiveness;
- work in partnership with schools, pupils, parents and communities to ensure educational entitlement and regular attendance; and
- link with a network of agencies providing education, health and social services for individuals with specific needs.

This is sought to be achieved through:

- promoting and supporting whole school attendance policies;
- providing advice on proven good practice;
- working together with school staff, pupils, parents and relevant others on programmes designed to improve attendance level;
- undertaking individual work with pupils;
- undertaking family centred work;
- developing group work with pupils and parents; and
- initiating statutory proceedings on behalf of the LA.

Role of the Governing Body

The role of the Governing Body in relation to attendance is to both support and challenge the school in asking questions about attendance data and school processes.



The Education (School Performance and Unauthorised Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006¹ require the governing bodies of every maintained school to set the following targets and submit them to the LA:

- A final target for the next school year;
- A reviewed target for the school year next but one;
- A provisional target for the school year next but two.

The governing body has appointed a governor, Mrs Helen Coleman, with specific responsibility for pupil attendance. The pupil attendance governor is the link between the governing body and the school in relation to attendance and should meet the designated staff lead regularly, probably on a termly basis. The nominated governor should help the governing body ensure that its statutory duties in relation to pupil attendance are met and that that staff and governors are appropriately trained.

Role of the Head teacher

- Set challenging but realistic targets to at least meet national/family averages for the school overall. Ensure that a strategy is devised to make solid progress towards them.
- Report statistics to the Attendance Governor and as part of the termly report to governors. Show comparative figures, not isolated statistics. Compare each half-term's figures with those for the previous year at the same time

Role of the Class Teacher

- Do not accept poor attendance. Make 100% attendance the expectation.
- Ensure that registers are always completed appropriately; never leave blank spaces.
- Ensure the Head teacher is informed of concerns over attendance.
- Following absence, do your best to provide catch-up opportunities so absentees do not fall behind. Where appropriate, ask parents to play a part in reinforcing missed learning.

Role of the Designated Member of Staff for attendance

Attendance is the responsibility of all staff. There is, however, a designated member of staff for attendance matters and all staff are able to discuss individual pupil attendance with this person.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2006/125/contents/made>



- Monitor registers daily and follow the school's procedures for first day calling. If no explanation has been received by the time registers close, parents should be contacted.
- Record reasons for absence on Teacher Centre.
- Issue attendance letters where required.
- Seek advice from other agencies if appropriate.
- Advise the Head teacher of any teacher who fails to maintain the register properly. Registers are legal documents and must be kept carefully and accurately.
- Provide data on weekly basis to the head teacher.
- Inform the Head teacher of families where bad habits are forming
- Assist in collating data for inclusion in reports, attendance returns, etc.
- Check and file all absence notes, emails or phone calls that are received, and ensure that details are reflected appropriately through categorisation of absence in the registers.
- Meet with the PSO on a regular pre-arranged basis.

Registration

- To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils' attendance marks are registered electronically via Teacher Centre
- Pupils are registered at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session, the register is open for 30 minutes and closes at 9.30 am;
- Teachers are required to record present or absent against each pupil's name. Absence marks must be followed up with the appropriate code being added once the reason for absence has been ascertained (see below).
- The individual schools, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance Codes 2010:

B Educated off-site	Approved Educational Activity
C Other authorised circumstance	Authorised Absence
D Dual-registered	Approved Educational Activity
E Excluded	Authorised Absence
F Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence



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

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.



The Role of Parents

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by elective home education.

It is only the school who may decide whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. A letter or telephone call does not in itself authorise an absence; only the school's acceptance of the explanation offered authorises the absence.

Absence from school will not be authorised for the following reasons:

- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Missed bus.
- Sleeping late
- No uniform
- Looking after brothers or sisters
- Minding the home
- Birthdays

N.B. As far as possible, all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours.

Absence, lateness and medical appointments

- Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone at the beginning of the first day of their child's absence. Individual schools monitor telephone calls each morning.
- Should a pupil be absent from school without explanation, we will try to contact home (telephone, email) A request will be sent to parents asking them to make contact with the school both as a safeguarding precaution and also to allow parents to indicate the reason for absence and provide an indication of when their child will be able to return to school. Unless an indication in terms of length of time, is given, parents are expected to



inform the school at the beginning of each subsequent day of absence unless other arrangements have been mutually agreed.

- Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking explanation.
- Lateness, especially if persistent should be treated in the same way as irregular attendance. Parents can be prosecuted if the issue of persistent lateness is not resolved. Lateness can be as damaging to a pupil's educational career as persistent absence can impact upon learning.
- If a child arrives late to school, parents must ensure that they sign in to a 'late book' contained in the office, stating a reason for being late. If pupils are required to leave school within the day, prior notice must be given to the school (agreed at the discretion of the Head teacher).
- Whenever possible medical appointments should be booked outside of the school day. If appointments are not possible outside of the school day, then proof of the appointment will be required and pupils should return to school afterwards unless there is a valid medical reason given. Where an absence is authorised, the school will use the appropriate code to record the absence. If a pupil is feeling unwell during the school day, then they will be sent to the school medical area where they will be treated appropriately. At this point, a decision will be made as to whether the pupil should be sent home or not.

Authorisation of absence (including holidays)

- Absences may only be approved by the Head teacher. We will request that parents provide the school with a full picture of the reasons and in some circumstances documentary evidence relating to their child's absence. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 states that all absences are to be treated as unauthorised until schools have agreed that a satisfactory explanation has been given which should normally be within one day. If a reason is accepted it needs to be recorded on the Teacher Centre system using the correct code.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give Head teachers still have the **discretionary power to authorise up to ten days** per academic year for holidays in term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance. Family holidays will only be authorised at the head teacher's discretion where parents are able to demonstrate that in the individual circumstances warrant it being authorised.
- When assessing requests for a holiday, the Head teacher will consider each request on an **individual basis**:-
 - the age of the child
 - The time of year of the proposed trip;



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

Balanced with

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

The above list is not exhaustive and the Head teacher is entitled to take into account

- other factors which they feel to be relevant to the exercise of their discretion. Parents
 - are expected to be clear at the time of making their request the family circumstances,
 - purpose of the trip and any views they have.
- Should the holiday take the total absence due to holidays for the year to being over 10 days then only in **exceptional circumstances** should this holiday be granted. The test of **exceptional circumstances** applies only to holidays which accumulate over the course of the year to more than 10 days. Holidays which accumulate to 10 days or less throughout the year need to be considered in accordance with paragraph 3.3 above.
 - St Aidan's Church in Wales VA has set 96 % attendance as a minimum target for all pupils.
 - The fundamental principle underlying this policy is that schools are open for 190 days a year. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Parents are actively encouraged to take time off and book holidays outside of term time as it is only with parental cooperation will it be possible to achieve and maintain a high level of attendance and attainment.

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

- Parents should not expect and head teachers should not assume that because a term time absence is agreed one year that it will be authorised the next. As children become older and progress through the stages of education there will inevitably be different circumstances applicable as they will be learning new topics and studying for a different



key stage. Likewise, it should also not be assumed that if there is an extended family / friends holiday where the children attend different schools that if the term time absence is agreed in one school that the other school will also agree the absence. The exercise of discretion lies solely with the individual Head teacher of any particular school and the circumstances and attendance records of individual children will inevitably differ.

- The Head teacher has the discretion to authorise only part of a term time absence. If the request is for a 10 day term time absence the head teacher can authorise 5 days and inform the parent that any days taken beyond the 5 days will be unauthorised
- For non-holiday related requests for absence the Head teacher should consider the Welsh Government School Attendance Codes Guidance 2010.

Leave of absence for more than two weeks must be seen as exceptional. We will explore with parents why such **leave of absence is necessary**. **Where** such absences are sanctioned they should be treated as an authorised absence.

Early Intervention

- St Aidan's Church in Wales VA School recognises the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by Our School App, leaflets, parents' evenings, school reports and the school website.
- When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. Where possible work will be provided to ensure that the pupil can keep as up to date as possible with the curriculum.
- The PSO, in conjunction with all the schools in the cluster, will ensure that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.
- We have chosen to adopt the following positive strategies for promoting good attendance:-
 - **Making sure parents and pupils** are clear on the impact of non-attendance on their learning
 - **Fully utilising the school App** to highlight and promote attendance and ensure that parents are full aware of expectations.
 - **An attendance cup** awarded.
 - **A special assembly** on a Friday to announce the collective attendance of each class that week.
 - **Engaging your head boy and girl** with attendance issues and ensure that the message is clear to pupils.
 - **Termly Certificates-** for attendance ,punctuality, best achievement, most improved attendance etc



- The school always seeks to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit from parents the support deemed necessary to ensure pupils attend school, sanctions may be used. In the first instance, parents may receive letters which:
 - Request reasons for their child's absence;
 - Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
 - Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
 - Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their support in getting their child to school on time;
 - Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence and the consequences of this in relation to penalty notices and involvement of PSS.
 - Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
 - Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice;
 - Advise them that a referral has been made to the Pupil Support Service.
- In some circumstances following warning letters, the school may seek further advice and recommendation from PSS or request that the PSS issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. The school should warn a parent when their child's attendance is approaching the criteria for a penalty notice. Once the criteria is met for a penalty notice the Head teacher will consider whether a warning is sufficient or contact should be made with the PSS to discuss issuing a penalty notice or prosecuting the parent for failing to secure regular attendance.

Penalty Notices

The criteria for issuing a penalty notice is set by the Local Authority. As the criteria may be reviewed or updated the school should always ensure they are working with the most up to date version of any code of conduct.

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

When a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions (five school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences during the current term and this brings the pupil's overall



attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive).

Unauthorised absences include:-

- unauthorised non-attendance at school;
- unauthorised holidays in term-time; and
- unauthorised late arrival after registration has closed.

Should the Local Authority alter the criteria for issuing a penalty notice the newly published code of conduct will take precedence over the criteria set out in this paragraph. The school should be sure to ensure that parents are made aware of any changes made to the code of conduct via their school website or newsletters and the school should as soon as is reasonably practicable revise this policy to reflect the new criteria.

- When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Pupil Support Service. A referral might be made when, for example:
 - A pattern of irregular unauthorised attendance has developed;
 - A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established with the pupil attendance dropping to below 85% with unauthorised absences.
 - There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance;
or
 - A pattern of truancy is persisting.
- St Aidan's Church in Wales VA will liaise with the Pupil Support Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.
- Before considering whether to make a referral to the local authority, action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems, such as:
 - bullying
 - experience of racism
 - caring responsibilities
 - ill health



- unmet ALN, or unidentified ALN or disability

School Targets

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

Mandatory Practice

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