



Blaendulais Primary School Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Introduction

At Blaendulais Primary School we believe that regular attendance and punctuality is essential if a child is to achieve their full potential and receive access to a broad and balanced curriculum and as such we work with parents to attain high standards in both. In order to encourage maximum attendance levels, both staff and pupils need to work within a framework of good practice that both supports and helps us to motivate pupils. Good attendance helps the children in this school community to maximise their learning and to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

This policy sets out the framework by which we operate in school.

DESIGNATED STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

NAME: Mrs. R. Dawson

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DEPUTY STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE AT THE SCHOOL

NAME: Mr. C. Fulford- Astley

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NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BODY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

NAME: Mr. G. Lias

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Rationale

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

Objectives

- To promote good attendance as this is vital to educational achievement.
- To convey clearly to parents and pupils that:
 - regular attendance is essential;
 - unauthorised absence and persistent lateness is not acceptable;
 - only the headteacher in the context of the law can approve absence;
 - parental condoned, unjustifiable absence will be investigated and will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

To keep records of attendance which:

- clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence by pupils;
- provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of school attendance rates through centrally held statistics.
- To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:
 - responding rapidly to pupil absence;
 - recognising pupils who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance records.
- To be sensitive to situations where regular attendance patterns are disrupted by external factors such as family bereavement.

Statutory Responsibilities

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

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

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

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

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

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/ parent belongs;
- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the LA. The law relating to walking distance effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Distance will be measured by nearest available walking route

Procedure

Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.35a.m. School gates open at 8.40 when there are teacher on duty in the yard and there to greet pupils and their families on the gate. The school uses the SIMS process of registration and each class uses electronic registers in their classrooms to continue our work of improving levels of pupil attendance.

PARENTAL SUPPORT

The role of the parent/guardian/carer in supporting the school's efforts in securing high levels of attendance is critical. At Blaendulais Primary School we aim to maintain close, effective and positive links with out parents and ensure that they are contacted at an early stage to deal with unexplained absences of their child. The school's policy is set out in the school prospectus and is explained to parents by the Foundation Phase teacher/Headteacher when pupils start at school.

With regard to pupil attendance and through discussion about Teaching Time, the staff have agreed the following guidelines for recording a child's absences.

Sickness

Phone call from a parent or relative - authorised unless there are attendance concerns or advice given from the schools' EWO.

Visit by a parent or relative on return to school - authorised unless there are attendance concerns or advice given from the schools' EWO.

Absence note - authorised unless there are attendance concerns or advice given from the schools' EWO.

Absence without a note/telephone call or visit – Unauthorised

However, there may be occasions when individual children need to be queried even when the absence is accompanied by a note. Teachers will be aware of these individuals and will look for patterns of absence.

Absence will be authorised for the following reasons:

- sickness
- unavoidable medical or dental appointments (Evidence of appointment required – e-mail/text/medical letter)
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- shopping
- Buying clothes/cars
- haircuts
- missed bus (transport delays/problems for LSC pupils travelling by LA taxi will be referred to EWO for advise)
- overslept
- no uniform
- looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents
- minding the house
- birthdays
- parents/carers/sibling unwell
- holidays / day trips taken in term time
- Appointments for parents/siblings – medical, beauty etc

Reintegration

The school will welcome back all pupils on return from an absence. This will include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

If the pupil has been absent for a considerable period of time, a reintegration plan will be introduced tailored to the needs of the individual

Holidays

Headteachers do have the discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday or trips. However, the LEA is strongly advising that any holidays or day trips in term time should be unauthorised, and that there should be no exceptions to this policy. The school adheres to this and family holidays during term time will **not be authorised**.

Parents are asked to make all medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Evidence of appointments will be asked for and copies uploaded to SIMS.

Involvement in a Public Performance

Involvement in Public Performances sometimes require an LEA licence, these will be authorised.

Any absences, without notification will be reported to the Headteacher/ School Clerk if no message has been received. She will then contact the parents via text message to request an explanation. If absences persist a phone call from the school will activate a visit from the Education Welfare Officer.

Unauthorised absence of an individual pupil, which brings the pupil's attendance to below 90% in any one term, or when unauthorised absence is due to a family holiday taken in term time, the Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations gives the school the ability to request that the Local Authority (Education Welfare Service) consider issuing a Penalty Notice to a parent(s)/day to day carer of the named pupil.

Practices and Procedures

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

The school adheres to the descriptors received from LEA

- 95-100% attendance - Best chance of success Your child is taking full advantage of every learning opportunity.
- 90-95% attendance - At least 2 weeks of learning missed Satisfactory. Your child may have to spend time catching up with work.

- 85-90% attendance - At least 4 weeks of learning missed Your child may be at risk of underachieving and may need extra support from you to catch up with work.
- 80-85% attendance - At least 5 ½ weeks of learning missed Your child's poor attendance has a significant impact on learning.
- Below 80% attendance - At least 7½ weeks of learning missed Your child is missing out on a broad and balanced education. You are at risk of prosecution.

The school encourages good attendance and punctuality by -

- creating a caring and nurturing environment whereby pupils' feels safe and appreciated as young adults
- ensuring that attendance and punctuality are recognised within the whole school reward system, eg lunch passes and tokens, attendance levels considered before a pupil is eligible for merit trips and trips abroad
- developing positive relationships with parents / carers and external agencies working with the family/ pupil
- monitoring and evaluating the early intervention strategies adopted by the school
- working closely with multi agency colleagues and the Education Inclusion Service to improve attendance and punctuality
- monitoring attendance data and trends and reporting this information termly to the Governing Body
- Celebrating attendance during assemblies
- Attendance rewards and certificates - most improved, hit the target at 95% and 100%
- Excess and persistent lateness may still result in FPN

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

Specific actions

The school will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and pupils through:

- the initial transition meeting prior to admission and if a child joins the school
- The school will also communicate the importance of attendance to parents and pupils through assemblies, the school prospectus, newsletters and the school website, Dojo
- If no contact is received by the parent/ carer of an absent pupil on the first morning of the absence, a telephone call is made by the school's administration staff to investigate the reason for the absence. If the school is not able to contact the family then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (o code).
- Details of the absence are recorded, if later received, and discussed with the headteacher and a decision will be made with regards to authorisation as soon as possible. The headteacher may ask the Education Welfare Service for advice with regards to this but the decision to authorise any absence remains with the school.

- If the pupil is registered as a Child in Need or on the Child Protection register and absent from school without reason, then the school should contact Social Services as soon as possible. A My Concern report may also be made by staff.
- If an absence remains unexplained for 3 consecutive days then the school will phone again and also alert the schools' EWO.
- When a pupil returns to school from an absence, but no explanation is offered, parents will be contacted for an explanation around their child's absence
- A letter will also be sent out if a pupil is persistently late to school.
- Ultimately, if an attendance matter cannot be resolved by the school and the appropriate steps have been followed, then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service for further investigation.

The school will also:

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

The Designated Member of Staff

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.

The Designated Member of Staff for Attendance:

- monitors the school's registers.
- liaises with teaching staff.
- meets with the LA Officer on a regular pre-arranged basis.
- refers to other agencies if appropriate.
- refers to the school nurse if there are doubts about the validity of an illness.
- oversees the use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance and requiring parental response.
- arranges for an attendance meeting in the case of repeated, unexplained absences (school will consider inviting the named governor for attendance to such a meeting).
- ensures that the Education Welfare Officer's role is known and understood in school.

Role of the Class Teacher

- The register is a legal document, it can be used in cases of prosecution for non-attendance or in cases where a family is subject to a care order, so it must be factually correct
- Class teachers are the first to note any changes in attendance or punctuality and should use any opportunity of asking parents on any outstanding reasons
- Any concerns, where no reasons have been given, should be brought to the attention of the office who arrange contact by telephone or letter
- Regular absence or a pattern of absence must be brought to the notice of the Headteacher
- The headteacher is the only person who can authorise that a pupil be removed from the register – this can only be done with the agreement of the LEA.
- The Headteacher will continue to be the direct link with the EWO in cases causing concern. Staff will be aware of pupils' previous records of attendance and if pupils are subject to support/concern of Social Services.

Parental responsibility

We wish to strive to improve attendance at Blaendulais Primary and ask that parents let us know on the first day of absence if possible either by calling in, by telephone or sending a note, rather than waiting for the child to return to school.

Our educational welfare officer is available to link between parents and school in any case of difficulty in attendance or any other welfare or social concerns. Prolonged absence or irregular attendance may result in prosecution. Parents will also be told of the school's target for the year, regularly via school newsletters. Parents will be kept informed of the attendance in each class via the school's noticeboard.

Dealing with poor attendance

Pupils with consistently poor attendance are targeted by the Headteacher in partnership with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). They meet regularly to discuss attendance and the EWO regularly visits families when attendance or timekeeping is a persistent problem.

Registers

It is vital that registers are carefully maintained and any information about a child's absence is recorded. Careful register keeping is an indication that all pupil absence is being questioned and followed through. All registers must be marked in the morning and afternoon sessions, dates must be used to correspond with weeks, unauthorised absences must be noted on a weekly and termly basis.

Children arriving after these agreed times (School Day starts at 8. 50am) will be asked to sign in at the main office. The number of minutes late will be recorded on SIMS. Children arriving after these agreed times will be marked late in the class Register. Whilst guidelines dictate that arrival after these times should be marked absent, we are concerned that in the case of evacuation of the buildings during Fire Drill, then procedures could be flawed.

School targets

Certificates for 100%, hit the target at 95% and improved attendance will be presented at the end of each term.

A weekly attendance cup is presented to the winning class in our Celebration Assembly.

Pupils with an annual attendance of 100% are presented with a gift token.

Attendance will be recorded on termly reports to parents/carers

Parents are informed of their child's attendance during Parent Consultation evenings and in the pupil's end of year reports

The governors receive a suggested target from the EWO on attendance for the school for the year

Registration Codes

/ Present (AM)

\ Present (PM)

B Off Site Education

C Other Authorised Circumstances

D Dual Registered i.e Present at another school or PRU

E Excluded (No alternative provision made)

G Family holiday (Not agreed)

I Illness

J Interview

L Late (Before the registers closed)

M Medical / Dental Appointment

N No reason yet provided for absence

O Unauthorised Absence (Not covered by other code)

P Approved Sporting Activity

R Religious Observance

S Study Leave

T Traveller Absence

U Late (after registers closed)

V Educational Visit or Trip

W Work experience

Y Partial or Enforced closure

X Non-compulsory school age absence

School closed to all pupils

Z Pupils not on roll yet

Monitoring

Attendance is monitored monthly by the Headteacher in conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer.

An Attendance Action Plan is completed in consultation with the EWO, submitted to the LA and will be reviewed twice a year to look at progress made.