



**TAFF BARGOED
LEARNING PARTNERSHIP**
'Learning and Growing Together'

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. All schools within the Taff Bargoed Learning Partnership fully recognise its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at our schools and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school via our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies right from entry into Nursery in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- In instances involving health, parents will be requested to provide proof of appointments through an appointment card or letter to verify the absence.

- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without valid reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Merthyr Tydfil LA where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Head who has responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Maintaining the accuracy of their class register (SIMS)
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Head where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at Parents evenings where necessary

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Promoting initiatives and strategies to secure the ongoing improvement in attendance.
- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the 'Late Book' is completed
- Working with the EWO to track individual attendance
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out letters regarding attendance

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Registration

School starts at 9:00am. There is sufficient time provided for all pupils to come into their classroom. Children are able to enter school from 8:50am, so that there is time for them to settle into class before starting the school day at 9:00am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register is taken on entry into school and registers are closed at 9:10am. Pupils arriving after this are marked as late. In the afternoon pupils are registered by 1.20pm.

All attendance records are documented using SIMS software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

(Attendance is marked as a '/' when a child is in school)

Lateness

Once the doors are closed at 9:00am the only way to get into school is via the Main School Entrance. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9:10am (after registers are closed) will be marked as late in the late book. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code 'L'). Any child who arrives for school later than 10:00am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code 'U').

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code 'M'). A letter or appointment card must be brought as proof when returning to school in order for us to authorise this.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter from the EWO, on behalf of the school, advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence, it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence via a phone call, and have not been able to get in touch with you via telephone, then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete.

If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code 'O')

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.10am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

As a school and governing body, we do not support parents taking holidays during term time. However, parents can seek up to 10 sessions of discretionary leave during term time.

A Holiday request form must be submitted to the school. These are available digitally in the school app or from the School Entrance Area of the school. All requests must be submitted before booking a holiday and must not be via any other method of communication e.g. emails, phone calls. Holidays will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Head Teacher.

For the most part, no holidays taken in term time will be authorised by the school. A holiday taken in Term time will always be an unauthorised absence. Please note that your child's attendance will be reviewed upon receiving an application. Pupils with attendance below 90%, and who take a holiday within term time will be liable for a Fixed Penalty Notice. The FPN will be issued by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95% (as a minimum).

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns.

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home.

Opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence can be arranged, as well as support provided by the school, with the aim of improving attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

Education Welfare Service

In some cases, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) can become involved in addressing pupils' attendance issues. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits once a week to check and monitor attendance. They carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 90%).

They work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Attendance Initiatives

Within the school, we recognise the importance of promoting good attendance amongst our pupils. As a school, we run a number of initiatives to promote attendance and celebrate the achievements of pupils who are regularly in school. These initiatives include:

- **100% Weekly Attendance:** - Pupils at the start of the year are provided with an 'Awesome Attendance' reward card to collect stickers. For each week of full attendance that a Pupil is in school they get a sticker for their reward card. After 10 full weeks of attendance, pupils are rewarded with a prize for having good attendance.
- **Good Attenders Reward** – At the end of each term pupils with 97%+ attendance are given a special Attendance Goodie Pack to celebrate their excellent achievement in attending school regularly.
- **Weekly Class Competition** – As a school we run a weekly attendance competition between classes within the school. There are competition rockets in each class and an attendance competition board in the school hall. Winners are announced in Special Assembly with the winning class attending being provided with a special 'Class of the Week' trophy and extra break on a Friday afternoon.
- **Class of the Term** – At the end of each term, the class with the best attendance has a 'Movie Afternoon' where a film and popcorn is provided for the winning class.
- **100% All Year Reward** – We want to celebrate those pupils who miss no school during a school year. These pupils are rewarded at the end of the year with a special voucher which allows them to purchase books and stationary for themselves, supporting their on-going education.

Monitoring Attendance

Our office staff, have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMS attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.