



Ysgol Gynradd
Penygawsi
Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

JANUARY 2015

YSGOL GYNRADD PENYGAWSI PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, identify the duty schools have to ensure that clear and efficient registration practices are in place and are accessible to the Local Authority for monitoring purposes, as required. A school register is a legal document that may be required to be presented as court evidence in Local Authority prosecutions for non-attendance. It is an offence for schools not to maintain accurate registers.

Rhondda Cynon Taf LA recommends that all schools should close their registers to pupils 30 minutes after the start of the session, in line with guidance from the Welsh Government. Under no circumstances should schools leave their registers open for the entire session.

It is the duty of the AWS on behalf of the LA to formally inspect school registers.

The school has the responsibility to monitor individual attendance rates weekly and use their own intervention methods to tackle individual pupil attendance issues where that pupil's attendance rate is 86% and above. A referral to the AWS is required from the school when an individual's attendance falls to 85% or below over a six week period and there is no exceptional reason for this. It is essential that the school attempts to address the issue in-house prior to referral and the school is expected to detail all actions that have been taken on the referral form.

The AWS referral form can be found in **Appendix 3.1**. The process for referral can be found in **Appendix 3.2**.

Schools have a statutory duty under section 175 Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This can only be fulfilled through effective registration systems and active, whole school monitoring of pupil absence, in order to support and promote regular school attendance.

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 guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence on the first day of the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent

If a child is late/absent

When a child is absent unexpectedly or late, the class teacher will undertake the following procedure

Pupils arriving late for registration i.e. up to 9.15am will be entered using the appropriate code L = late for registration

If a pupil has not arrived by 9.15am (close of registration) they will be entered as unauthorised late = U

The school secretary will arrange for the registers to be collected at 9.30am and will then endeavour to contact a parent or guardian wherever a pupil is absent without reason before 10:30am(First response).

Children/parents arriving late must report to the School office so that the school is aware that the child is in school and can mark the register appropriately. This is a health and safety requirement.

A note/ appointment card must be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical, dental or other health related appointment.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher must take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, e.g. a special event such as performing in a show or playing a music instrument or exam. We expect parents and carers to contact the school at least a week in advance.

Holidays in term time

Parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw pupils from school during term time for a family holiday – it is the law that they apply to the school for permission in advance. The maximum number of days that a pupil is permitted to miss for a holiday is ten days – any absence in excess of this must follow safeguarding principles.

With Cabinet approval for consistency across all schools, RCT head teachers are encouraged to adopt a zero tolerance to term time holidays from the 1st September 2014. This would put this authority in line with Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and all ERW (South West and Mid Wales Consortium) authorities.

Whilst the legislation under Section 7 (3 and 4) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 allows head teachers to “grant leave of absence from school for the purposes of a family holiday for no more than 10 days in an academic year”, the local authority stance is one which will discourage holiday absence unless the pupil and family are exempt under one of the three “exceptional” circumstance criteria.

Those exemptions are:

- Families of serving armed forces personnel;
- Parent or child experiencing a life limiting illness;
- Families that have suffered an acute trauma.

In the event of holiday leave for a pupil being requested by a parent/carer, the school is asked to record the sessions as unauthorized absences in line with the Cabinet decision and then make a formal request for a fixed penalty notice to be issued. This process is outlined in more detail in the local authority’s Code of Conduct.

Unlike other circumstances for a fixed penalty notice, a holiday absence will not be subject to a monitoring period (15 school days) for improvement to happen but a fixed penalty notice will be automatically issued on receipt of the school's request. Payment will, as with other circumstances, be £60 if paid within 28 days, £120 if paid within 42 days.

School attendance data will be monitored for the use of the holiday absence codes (H, F and G), so that the authority is in a position to ensure the consistent application of both the codes and the requests for fixed penalty notices.

The governors of Penygawsi Primary School will follow the guidance provided by the Local Authority in its entirety from September 2015.

From September 2015 all holiday absences will be marked as unauthorised absences.

Parents will still be required by law to make applications for holiday leave. This will support the monitoring and reporting of the reasons for unauthorised absences.

From January 2015 until August 31st 2015, the governors will authorise holidays when:

The pupil's current attendance is equal to or greater than 95%

It is the first holiday applied for during the academic year

That the holiday absence requested is for one period of time up to ten days

Where parents have limited the days lost in school by taking part of the holiday in holiday time

There is evidence that the holiday was booked before December 31st 2014

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over ten days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can work with their parents and keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Repeated unauthorised absences/lateness

The Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO) will visit the school regularly and together with the secretary and Headteacher consider the rates of attendance of all pupils. Those with below 85% for the term will be identified so that action can be taken, unless there is a known and acceptable reason for such a high level of absence. Parents of pupils highlighted will then

be issued with first or second warning letters pointing out the figures and describing the importance of good attendance. If the situation does not improve, the AWO will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation. The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Promoting good attendance

The school uses a variety of strategies to improve attendance. These include 'Late on the Gate' monitoring, specialist assemblies and rewards, letters to parents and competitions. In addition, holidays in term time are actively discouraged and the results of poor attendance are emphasised to all parents.

Rewards for good attendance

All the children who have 100% attendance in any one term will receive a certificate for excellent attendance, awarded at the last assembly of the term. There are special certificates for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.

All pupils with 100% each term are part of a draw for a prize of a £15 cinema voucher. All pupils with 100% for the year are included in the end of year draw for a 'Tablet' eg an Amazon Fire Tablet.

Class attendance is recorded on the monitoring board in the school hall for pupils and parents to refer to.

Attendance targets

The LA and school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the LA and governors. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years and related to the FSM index. These targets are made known to the children and parents.

Fixed Penalty Notices

"To comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, the school will operate in accordance with the local authority's Code of Conduct for fixed penalty notices for regular non-attendance at school. It remains the discretion of the head teacher to authorise absences in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the local authority. "

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will be given termly reports from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be. The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years. The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus, and in the annual governors' report.

Review

The governing body reviews this policy every two years. They governors may, however, review the policy earlier than this, if the government introduces new regulations, or if the governing body receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

Signed:

HEADTEACHER

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Date: January 2015

This policy will be reviewed in the spring term 2017