

Be the best

Respect, Achievement, Care



Attendance Policy

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Is this a statutory or recommended policy/document	
Is this a new or a revised policy	Reviewed
Signed (Headteacher/School)	
Signed (Chair of Governing Body / Chair of Committee)	

Introduction

The importance of regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for school, governors, LA, parents and the students themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, students diminish the value of the education provided for them. They may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of student groups may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

Attendance is now increasingly regarded as a measure of the quality of the education offered by a school and the government has indicated that all schools should be aiming for a target of at least 92%.

Ysgol Clywedog will encourage and promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many students as we can, but we will need to balance this with measures to address the needs of those children who do, for whatever reason, find it difficult to attend. A whole-school approach to attendance will focus on promoting attendance but will also address the issue of truancy where it occurs.

The whole-school approach to attendance relates to a wide range of other school issues, including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees, curricular differentiation, home-school links and the role of the pastoral team and the Education Social Work (ESW) service.

Legal Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations.

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 that *“..... the parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law*”

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

- the student was absent with agreed leave (authorised absence);
- the student was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student/parents belong;
- a limited defence is available to the parents of travelling children (see Appendix 1).

The Act also places a legal obligation on:

- the LA to provide and enforce attendance;
- schools to register attendance and notify the LA of a child's absence from school;
- the governing body to make sure school registers are kept, one for attendance and one for admissions.

Whole-school Attendance Policy

The framework for our attendance policy is based on ***Philosophy, Principles, Procedures, Performances and Practice.***

Philosophy

Ysgol Clywedog is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all students. We believe that if students are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a school, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance by all students. Any problems which impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. It is the policy of Ysgol Clywedog to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Ysgol Clywedog will actively promote and encourage 100% attendance for all students.

Ysgol Clywedog will give a high priority to conveying to parents and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems, which can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems, which affect a student's attendance, we will investigate, identify and strive, in partnership with parents and students, to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the students to full attendance at all times.

Principles

Ysgol Clywedog will:

- ensure all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law;
- complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and every lesson;
- stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence;
- display attendance rates around the school and reward good and improved attendance of all students;
- promote positive staff attitudes to students returning after absence;
- consult with all members of the school community and the ESW service in developing and maintaining the whole-school attendance policy;
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers and the school governors;
- send newsletters each term to parents and students informing them of attendance rates and related issues;
- work towards ensuring all students feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a student is absent, she/he will be missed.

Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent student on the first morning of absence, we will:

- contact the parent by telephone/text;
- send a letter if an explanation has still not been received after three days of unexplained absence;
- invite the parents into school after a maximum of ten days absence, unless other action is planned. The meeting will include a senior member of staff, parent(s), student and the ESW. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties, which are preventing the students from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance;
- if the parents do not attend, refer to ESW service;
- help the student's re-integration where a student is returning to school after an absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a student returning after a long-term absence, than an Individual Reintegration Programme will be implemented.

In order to ensure the success of this policy, every member of school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to students the importance of their education.

Performance

It is important to set realistic targets. The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success, the school will consider whether or not:

- attendance has improved;
- punctuality has improved;
- re-integration plans have been successful;
- the school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance, both within the school, governing body and the local community;
- students are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within the school;
- attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons or as a theme for any other lesson.

Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- keeping and maintaining registers accurately;
- maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers;
- regularly analysing attendance data;
- ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance;
- liaising closely with the school's ESW;
- recording, carefully all telephone messages.

Keeping the Registers

The status of the register

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. A register printout may also be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to students' end of term reports, to records of achievement and to leaver's references.

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial if attendance and punctuality are high profile within the school. It is vital students are aware that registration is a significant part of the day.

Registration may be perceived as a task to be completed as quickly as possible. All staff involved with the registration process should be aware that the law is very specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping registers is of the utmost importance. It should not be relegated to the bottom of the list of priorities by the class teacher.

Marking the Register

- no student should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he/she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher.
- morning registration should be closed after 10.10am each day; afternoon registration should be closed at 2:10pm.
- when a student arrives late, after 9am but the register is still open, the student should be marked as late but counted as present for the session;
- where a student misses registration but provides an adequate explanation and/or medical card or letter to the teacher, she/he should be marked as an authorised absence;
- students must not mark the register under any circumstances;
- removal of students from class registers should only be undertaken when authorised by the assistant headteacher in charge of admissions, the relevant progress manager and/or the ESW;
- the decision to authorise an absence should be made within a maximum of two weeks from the date of absence.

Computerised Registration

Using a computerised system will not, by itself, improve attendance. It does, however, provide an accessible, accurate and easy to use record of information relating to the individual student or whole-school attendance in the form of:

- an official monthly register which codes all absences, allowing the reader to quickly identify patterns and trends in authorised and unauthorised absences;
- an individual registration certificate which can be produced at any time in the school year and includes information on total percentage attendance and absence;
- an absence-mapping facility which can be used to check a student's attendance against another student, or a group of students' attendance if there is a suspicion of multiple truancy;
- a record of attendance for each class over any given period of time which will provide a percentage attendance figure for each session and data, which could identify pattern of absence for individual, as well as the whole class.

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

Whole-school attendance figures produced half termly, based on year groups, can indicate factors such as:

- declining attendance in Years 10 and 11 respectively;
- the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. attendance may decline in the colder months and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate:

- the effect of staff absenteeism;
- the fall in attendance preceding teacher training days, half terms, study leave or work experience;
- the effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday;
- the effect of activity days, day trips or residential trips;
- the effect of students taking holidays in term time.

Continuous analysis of individual student'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 ESW and pastoral staff more effectively by producing:

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

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

Then a student will be placed on an attendance improvement plan, sanctioned by their progress manager.

Types of Absence

Authorised Absence

Only a Headteacher can authorise an absence. Parents and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

The key points to be considered when deciding to authorise absences are set out in WAG guidance:

- it is a legal requirement that registered students of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually;
- schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for student absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation;
- schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties;
- an explanation for every absence is required, if one is not forthcoming the absence should be treated as unauthorised;
- where absence is authorised, schools should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance;
- lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness should be treated in the same way as irregular attendance;
- school should develop a close working relationship with the ESW, in order to promote regular school attendance.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes all unexplained absences. NB - the school **does not** authorise holidays during term time.

If a child is absent with the approval of the school, for whatever reasons, no offence is deemed to have been committed. Thus, the decision taken by the school to give, or withhold, authorisation for an absence, is a critical factor in determining the LA's decision to prosecute parents.

We need to exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If there is any suspicion of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be further investigated and left unauthorised until the matter has been clarified to our satisfaction. The decision taken by Ysgol Clywedog to authorise absence, or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the ESW service.

Parentally Condoned Absence

Parentally condoned absence is, in many ways, more difficult to identify than any other form of student absence. This form of absence is equally as damaging to the student's educational experience as any other form of absence. The parents, in many cases, perceive they are keeping their child away from school for legitimate reasons; they may feel they are protecting their children. It is essential that, when school staff feel a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging, they work closely with the education, social and health support services to ensure the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the student and parents.

Factors which may contribute to parentally condoned absence

- separation anxiety – the parent and/or child may be frightened of separation from each other;
- the child may be needed to contribute to the family income by working either within the home or outside;
- the child may be the only significant carer within the family;
- the parent may be physically or psychologically ill;
- there may be social issues which parents may feel are of more importance than educational issues;
- the parent may not value education and prevent the child from attending school because of their belief;
- the parent may be unwilling or unable to provide appropriate clothing (uniform, shoes, coats etc).

The Local Authority will have powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices of £60 for unauthorised absence from school with effect from January 2015. The Fixed Penalty Notices could be issued to address any unauthorised absences from school in excess of five school days in one term. An information leaflet is available from WCBC.

Lateness

Persistent lateness can be as damaging to a student's school career as persistent absence. Students who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but also that of others and being persistently late may also lead to truancy. Poor punctuality may indicate problems within the student's home, which the student may need help to deal with; chronic lateness may result in a student losing his/her attendance mark for the session and the absence will be noted as unauthorised. For some students, arriving punctually may be beyond their control.

Where a situation at home makes it difficult for a student to arrive on time, consideration should be given to an appropriate referral to an outside agency. Schools can request advice from their ESW on the issue.

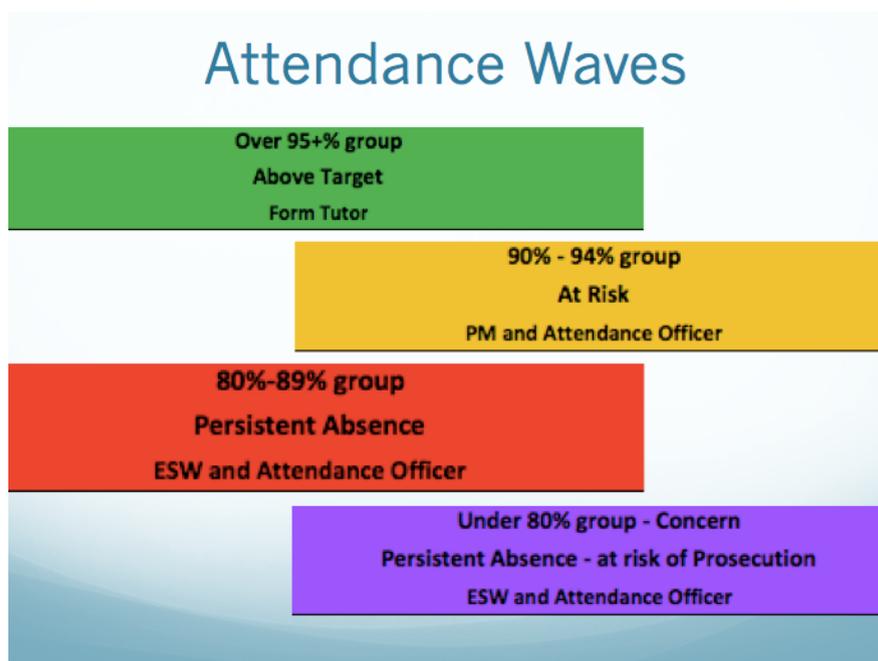
Where the student is late due to family circumstances, for example where a student is the main carer in the family, the school may wish to use more supportive interventions. The difficulty with these cases is that children are often reluctant to discuss their home circumstances because they are afraid it might get their parents into trouble.

The role of Progress Manager in respect of absence

All student absence should be followed up as soon as possible. The action taken and the responses received should always be recorded.

The Progress Manager is normally responsible for following up absences, but consistency of practice is helped when the form tutor liaises effectively with the Progress Manager.

Half termly interventions are planned based on 4 attendance waves.



The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- when a child is absent without explanation, the Administration Assistant/Attendance should contact the parents as soon as possible;
- when a student has been absent for three days without an explanation, a standard letter should be sent home. This should be recorded by the Administration Assistant/Attendance with the date of sending;
- a letter should be sent when a student returns from absence without a letter of explanation from parent;
- after three days of absence, if no response is received, the matter should be referred to the Progress Manager;
- notes, records of telephone calls and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialled;
- where explanations for absence are not satisfactory, or where absence persists, the Progress Manager should invite the parent(s) into school to discuss any difficulties, which may prevent a student, from attending school. If parents do not attend, or send apologies, the ESW should be asked to visit;
- Progress Managers should contact parent(s) where there are problems of lateness, either by telephone or by the standard letter. Persistent lateness can be as detrimental to a student's education as can poor attendance.

Encouraging & Sustaining Good Attendance

Ysgol Clywedog gives particular attention to the following matters in seeking to enhance the climate in which good attendance may flourish:

- the school's commitment to achieving high levels of attendance should be explicit and clear to students, staff and parents;
- the school should try to ensure the student's experience in classrooms is of a positive and enriching quality which will encourage him/her to take responsibility for, and show commitment to, their own learning;
- some students fail to attend because they are unable to keep up with their peers in class and become discouraged. That might be an indication of a learning difficulty. As part of its policy on special educational needs, Ysgol Clywedog will ensure children's needs are identified and action is taken to meet those needs or, if appropriate, through a referral to an outside agency e.g. Educational Psychologist;

- some students stay away from school because they are afraid of bullying or of behaviour in the playground, which may frighten or alarm them. We should be alert to this possibility in investigating individual cases of poor attendance and, in reviewing policy on discipline, should keep in mind how the school's attitudes on this matter may influence attendance.

Rewards

Ysgol Clywedog has an important role in encouraging attendance by providing rewards for good and improved attendance and punctuality, both for individuals and classes or groups. Care should be taken to acknowledge individuals who are making an effort to attend but who nonetheless, and for acceptable reasons, may have poor attendance overall. Such rewards include:

- letters of congratulations, certificates for good attendance which may be taken home;
- a mention in assembly;
- the award of various 'prizes' depending on Year group.