



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

Pupil Attendance at School Handbook

2023-2026

Project Name	Pupil Attendance Handbook
Version	1
Date	August 2023
Review date	July 2026
Author	Adele Pugh

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION	3
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	3
LEGAL CONTEXT	3-4
Post COVID attendance	4
ROLE OF PARENTS AND CARERS	4-5
SCHOOL LEVEL ACTION	5-6
• Registration Practices	5-6
• Lateness	6
• Reduced timetable	6-7
WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY	7-12
• Effective Practices for Promoting Regular Attendance At School (School Based Initiatives)	7
• Parental Engagement	7
• Management Of Data	8
• Vulnerable Groups	8-9
• Attendance Target Setting	10
• Attendance Data	11
• Early Intervention	11
• Referral for Additional Support	11-12
LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION	12-15
• Education Welfare Service	12
• LA Statutory Functions	12-13
• Fixed Penalty Notices	13-14
• Prosecution Process	14-15
• Management of Data	15
APPENDICES	16-55
1. Action Plan	16-17
2. Persistent Absenteeism	18-19
3. Graduated Response Guidance	20-21
4. Registration Information	22-23
5. Lateness	24-25
6. Guidance on Codes	26-34
7. Guidance for Model Policy	35-37
8. Good Practice for Improving Attendance	38-41
9. Guidance on Exemplar Policy on Absconding	42-46
10. Exemplar Parental Policy	47-55

INTRODUCTION

The importance of school attendance cannot be understated. School gives lasting friendships, important social skills, opportunities, choices and experiences.

If a child misses school they are likely to;

- have problems keeping up with school work;
- dislike school more;
- obtain poor examination results;
- not achieve to their full potential;
- lose their place in friendship groups and become isolated from peers;
- become involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour; and/or
- find difficulty in getting into further education or a job/career.

Merthyr Tydfil is committed in ensuring that all children and young people fulfil their potential – regular attendance at school is one of the biggest factors in achieving this.

Improving educational outcomes for our children and young people is a key priority for the Local Authority. The links between poor attendance and attainment are compelling and the Local Authority continues to endeavour to address the root cause of non-attendance with persistent absenteeism a significant area of challenge.

‘Persistent failure to send children to school is a clear sign of neglect’. Please see **Appendix 2** for ‘persistent absentees’.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this handbook is to promote a consistent message that attendance at school is a key priority in Merthyr Tydfil. It also intends to;

- outline the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in promoting attendance at school;
- provide advice and guidance to schools on effective practices and strategies to improve attendance;
- clarify the role of the Education Inclusion Officer in tackling attendance issues, including case management and prosecution processes; and
- clearly identify links to other policies.

LEGAL CONTEXT

Regular School Attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, states that the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age (5-16 years) receives efficient full time education that is suitable to the child’s age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be

by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child at home).

The legal definition of a parent means: 'all natural parents whether married or not, any person who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility.

If it appears to a Local Authority (LA) that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2000, there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, Section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This offence requires proof that the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed to act. Under this aggravated offence, a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction can lead to a custodial sentence.

Post COVID attendance

Prior to the pandemic, attendance across Merthyr Tydfil was showing a gradual improvement. However, attendance levels have not returned to pre-pandemic levels and remains a concern. Post-pandemic has seen our schools experiencing a higher number of persistent absentees due to social/emotional issues, family issues, anxiety, mental health as well as a higher number of unauthorised absences. This is not unique to Merthyr Tydfil but is also an all Wales picture. The EWS has an ongoing commitment to support wellbeing and increased attendance levels and has developed an action plan to better support schools in addressing attendance, tackling persistent absentees and improve joined up working with partners across the LA. **Please see Appendix 1.**

ROLE OF PARENTS AND CARERS

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child of compulsory school-age receive a suitable education appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude and to any additional learning needs they may have. It is also the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school their child is registered at as soon as possible if their child will be absent, and ensure a satisfactory explanation is given to the school.

Parent/carers can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children at school taking the following actions:

- Start good habits early, arrive at school on time and keep to school rules.

- Inform the school on the first day of any illness or absence, providing medical evidence where appropriate.
- Make it known that they do not approve of poor attendance, lateness or truancy. Ensure their children only miss school for legally allowed reasons such as illness or days specifically set aside for religious observance.
- Always send in notes to explain an absence.
- Avoid booking family holidays during term time.
- Attend parents' evenings and other school events.
- Read all letters that the child brings home from school.
- Talk to the school or the Education Welfare Service about any problems or difficulties they may be experiencing.
- Support school in encouraging good behaviour in school as well as out of school.
- Take an interest in their child's schoolwork and homework.

SCHOOL LEVEL ACTION

The school is initially responsible for identifying and following up pupil absences. Every school should have an effective and recognised procedure. All pupil absences should be followed up as soon as possible. The action taken, and the responses received, should always be recorded. Please see **Appendix 3** for the Graduated Response.

Registration Practices

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 set out the requirements on schools to maintain admission and attendance registers. Schools must keep two registers: an admission register, which serves as the school roll, and an attendance register. The admission register should include details of pupils from the date they have been admitted to the school.

Attendance registers must be called twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The afternoon registration must take place at the start or during the afternoon session, not at the end of the morning session or during the break between sessions. The register must show whether each pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. In addition, where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means either the school has given approval in advance, or that a satisfactory explanation has been given afterwards (the absence should be classified as unauthorised until that time). Registers need to be up to date so that schools can account for all pupils particularly in an emergency.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- truancy before or during the school day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark; and
- day trips and holidays in term time.

Only schools can authorise an absence however if they are in doubt that the explanation is not a reasonable basis for missing school the absence must be treated as unauthorised until further investigations are made.

Excessive amounts of authorised absence can also disrupt learning and encourage disaffection. Schools should therefore look out for emerging patterns of authorised absence for individual pupils or groups of pupils and these can be challenged by asking for medical evidence if appropriate.

No pupil should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he or she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher. **Spaces must not be left in the register.** See **Appendix 4.**

Lateness

Registers should be closed at an agreed time each day. Welsh Government guidelines suggest 30 minutes after the start of each session. The school will need to determine a constant and consistent arrangement. See **Appendix 5.**

- Where a pupil arrives late but the register is still open the pupil should be marked as late but counted as present for that session. The code to be used is at the discretion of the school.
- Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, he/she should be marked as late but counted as an authorised absence and marked as an 'L'. Good practice would be to insert a comment as to reasons why a pupil is late.
- Where a pupil misses registration (and arrives after registration, without an adequate explanation and the register has closed), the absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence – "U".

Reduced timetable

There is no statutory basis upon which to establish a reduced timetable, however, in exceptional circumstances schools may need to implement a reduced timetable in order to support a pupil who cannot attend school full-time for a short, agreed period.

It is important that schools act to ensure that the WG regulations in respect of attendance are correctly observed for pupils on a reduced timetable.

‘C’ code - to be used when a pupil has been placed on an agreed part time timetable, that includes sessions which have been mutually agreed not to involve attendance at any other institution or supervised activity.

For consistency, a corporate set of attendance coding is in operation in Merthyr Tydfil, this is attached at **Appendix 6**.

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

National Assembly for Wales Guidance Circular 203/2016 Inclusion and Pupil Support and the Belonging, Engaging and Participating guidance 2023, advises that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance, which should be set out in a School Attendance Policy. The School Attendance policy should be published and easily accessible for learners and parents.

Detailed attendance policy documents should specify the roles and responsibilities for learners, parents, staff and governors. It should also set out procedures for dealing with any attendance and absence issues that are likely to arise, as well as being a vehicle for planning interventions and support mechanisms for individual learners when they have difficulty in attending regularly for whatever reason. Consultation with staff, and with learners and their parents, should be a well-established basis for developing all school strategies, policies and practices, including those on attendance.

(Guidelines on a Model Attendance Policy are attached at **Appendix 7**.)

Effective Practices For Promoting Regular Attendance At School (School Based Initiatives)

Some examples of good practice in schools used to raise the profile of attendance are as follows:

- First day contact;
- Reward assemblies;
- Reward systems such as non-uniform day;
- Certificates for most improved and 100% attendance;
- End of term ‘fun’ days for pupils with full attendance for that week; and
- Reward trips for best attendance.

See **Appendix 8** for a more extensive list on good practice and **Appendix 9** on ‘Absconding’.

Parental Engagement

In order to promote wellbeing in school’s Family Liaison Officers (FLOs), Attendance Officers (AOs) and Education Inclusion Officers (EIOs) have undertaken Family Engagement Officer training. Schools have been asked to create their own parental engagement policies which will develop family engagement through effective practice procedures, ensuring positive outcomes towards raising standards to bridge the gap between home, school and the community.

See **Appendix 10** for an exemplar parental policy

Management of 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 or teaching groups.

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

All schools hold a great deal of information about attendance which is not always fully used. This information can be of great use in schools for strategic planning and can enable schools to manage attendance issues more effectively. Whole school attendance figures produced monthly, termly or yearly, based on year groups, can indicate factors such as:

- declining attendance in year groupings; and
- the effect of seasonal attendance e.g. inclement weather and preceding school holidays.

Weekly figures may illustrate the:

- effect of staff absenteeism;
- fall in attendance preceding teacher training days, half terms, study leave or work experience;
- effect of ending terms on a Monday or Tuesday;
- effect of activity days, day trips or residential trips; and
- effect of the timing of the school day;

Continuous analysis of individual pupil'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 education inclusion officer and pastoral staff more effectively by producing:

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

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

Vulnerable Groups

- **Looked After Children** - children and young people may be looked after by the LA for a variety of reasons. Most children are looked after under voluntary arrangements. A minority are subject to care orders. Most children looked after will have been affected by distressing and damaging experiences. They may be living away from home because of family breakdown, abuse or neglect or social need. Nearly all will have to cope with some sense of loss of family, siblings, friends or identify or familiar surroundings. Some may carry feelings of guilt or hidden injuries or may have

low self-esteem. All or any of these factors will affect the way these children act. Many children may also be behind in their education. The Audit Commission's 1994 report "*Seen but not Heard*" identified low educational achievements and irregular attendance of children in residential care. It is important, therefore, that these disadvantages are not compounded and that early entry into a local school is facilitated.

- **Traveller Children** - the special position of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families is recognised by Section 444(6) of the Education Act 1996. It protects Traveller parents/carers of no fixed abode from conviction if the parent can demonstrate that:
 - He/she is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as requires him/her to travel from place to place.
 - The child has attended a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits.
 - Where the child has attained the age of six years, he has made at least 200 attendances (i.e. sessions or half days) during the preceding twelve months.

The purpose of this section is not to protect Traveller parents/carers from legal action, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. It is to ensure that children are receiving suitable education when not in school.

In general, the aim should always be to ensure that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, in common with all other children, attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible – 200 attendances should not be regarded as the norm. A balance has to be found between the need for legal action taken against individual cases, the interests of the child and adopting a sensitive and sympathetic approach that recognises the lifestyle and cultural traditions of the family.

Schools may authorise absence of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children where they are satisfied that a family migrates but gives reasonable indications that it has every intention of returning. This includes Gypsy and other Travellers, circus and fairground families leaving sites and winter quarters, with every expectation that they will return. Some schools in these circumstances are able to maintain contact with the children by outreach work or the provision of distance learning packs, although such activities should not be viewed as a preferable alternative to attendance at school. Some reasonable latitude on absence might also be offered in respect of families who have moved from, or have been evicted from, unauthorised sites while the family finds another site. However, in the latter circumstances, all efforts should be made to encourage the maintenance of attendance at school. Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence should be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil.

- **English As An Additional Language (EAL)** - parents/carers of children from diverse cultural ethnicities, such as (Polish and Portuguese) families may feel that a school setting is not a safe environment for the child/children. It is critical that all schools recognise and appreciate this cultural diversity and endeavour to recognise any issues that may arise, which may prevent these pupils from accessing suitable education. In addition, many schools can offer bilingual support that is utilised in the classroom setting.

Attendance Target Setting

The Education (School Performance and Unauthorised Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 were introduced under Section 53 of the Education Act 2002, which amended Section 63 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Under these regulations, governing bodies of every maintained school (other than a special school established in a hospital) will be required to set targets for the reduction of all absences at the school.

During COVID from 2020 Welsh Government revoked target setting and as such schools were not required to set targets for future years. Schools are advised however to set targets for attendance based on previous trends and and the projected effects of any new approaches to improving attendance.

High expectations are central to the target setting process and to providing the conditions that enable all pupils to realise their potential.

“The greatest danger is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it”. (Michelangelo)

All schools should have clear strategies and plans for achieving targets. These should be integral to the process of school improvement planning. The strategies will be informed by:

- a shared belief that pupils in the school can achieve as well as pupils in the highest performing similar schools;
- a precise understanding of each pupil’s strengths and areas for improvement;
- robust, accurate and regular tracking of each pupil’s progress;
- intervention and support that are closely aligned to individual needs and have a proven record of success;
- the involvement of each pupil in assessing strengths, areas for improvement and in identifying how particular aspects of their learning can be improved - pupils are more likely to make progress if they understand clearly their present levels of achievement, know what they need to do next and are involved in discussing how to improve their work; and
- the involvement of pupils and their parents to develop a shared understanding of the roles they play in achieving the targets.

In order to ensure that attendance matters are addressed swiftly it is recommended that a whole school target for attendance is confirmed with the governing body early in the Autumn Term.

Regulations also place a duty on schools to publish within the annual report for every school year the following information:

- Actual absence rate in the relevant school year.
- The absence target (as outlined above).
- A statement setting out the extent to which the actual absence rate met the final target set for the same school year.

Attendance Data

Schools are required to ensure that their data is complete and that there are no missing marks, by no later than the **15th of the month**. For example, data for September should be completed by no later than the 15th October. This will allow the LA to pull the data through Capita and provide schools with comprehensive data packs and analysis. The information required is such as:

- Group session summary for the month
- Group session summary for the rolling figure – i.e. from the first day of the school year to the end of the current month
- Group analysis by attendance code for the month
- Group analysis by attendance code for the rolling figure (as above)
- Gender for all of the above reports

Early Intervention

The importance of monitoring absenteeism and follow up action by school staff before serious cases are referred to the Inclusion Service cannot be underestimated. Often early intervention at the start of any attendance issues can lead to a swift and positive outcome. Good practice suggests that before a referral is made to another agency schools should first have:

- sent a general absence letter to parents/carers to advise them of falling attendance and offering support;
- spoken to the pupil to see if they have any issues that are making it difficult to attend school, i.e. bullying, curriculum difficulties etc; and
- invited parents/carers to come into school to discuss difficulties and agree any appropriate support packages.

All school level action should be recorded as this will be needed as supporting information for a referral to the education inclusion service should additional support become necessary.

Referral for Additional Support

There are various agencies that schools can refer to for additional support for a pupil if needed, such agencies are:

- Education Inclusion Service
- School wellbeing team
- Education Child Psychology Service
- Children Social Services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- School Nurse
- School Based Counselling
- Early Help Hub
- Youth Support
- English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Gypsy Traveller Support
- Llamau
- Merthyr Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service (MIDAS)

- Youth Offending Support
- Inspire to Achieve
- Parenting Team

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTION

Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) is a team within Inclusion in the Learning Department. The service provides advice and guidance to all schools on attendance and welfare matters. The LA statutory functions are as listed below.

LA Statutory Functions

- Instigate and authorise the prosecution process in conjunction with school
 - Issue “A” and “B” warning letters prior to commencing court action
 - Quality assure prosecution file
 - Sanction file and facilitate legal process
- Administer and monitor the FPN process i.e.
 - Issuing FPN warning letters
 - Monitor the 15 day monitoring period
 - Issue FPN
 - Monitor payments of FPNs and progress cases of non-payment to court
- Safeguarding of children in schools as directed in the Children’s Act 1989
- Tracking/tracing Children Missing Education (CME)
- Attending and supporting Pupil Disciplinary Committees (PDCs) Exclusion hearings
- Attending and supporting Pupil Disciplinary Committees (PDCs) Exclusion appeals
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Child Employment Licensing
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Child Entertainment Licensing
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Child Chaperone Licensing
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)
- Responsible for the administration and monitoring of Attendance Orders (AOs)
- Auditing of School Attendance Registers and use of WG codes
- Monitoring of exclusions

Legal action to enforce attendance can only be taken by the LA.

For those schools who have bought into the EWS SLA, the Education Inclusion Officer (EIO) has a dual role to play as a provider of a service to the school and as mediator between home and school. The EIO will undertake attendance improving activities as directed by the Headteacher. Some examples of concerns for school to ask the EIO to become involved are as follows;

- Unresolved attendance problems
- Unexplained absences

- Repeated, condoned absences
- Irregular attendance
- Emotional/behavioural problems
- Suspected illegal child employment
- Material needs
- Family trauma – pupil distressed, mood swings, sudden changes in character
- Concern over the care and control, health or general wellbeing of a child at home or in the community.
- Pupil is developing a pattern of lateness

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)

Legal Basis and Rationale

New legislation has empowered designated Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) Officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to the parents/carers of children and young people who have unauthorised absence from school on behalf of the Headteacher.

The issuing of FPNs will remain the responsibility of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) in response to requests made by Headteachers and their nominated deputies.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is a legal requirement and essential if pupils are to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Parents/carers and pupils are supported at school and at local authority level to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a range of assessment and intervention strategies with sanctions of any nature only used where parental cooperation is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

Penalty notices are an added means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for the absence. Only schools, and not the parents/cares, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for the absence is reasonable before doing so. Any absence that is not authorised by the school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure their child's attendance at school and that absence is not authorised by the school. The legislation governing the implementation of FPNs is outlined in the following:

- Sections 444A, and 444B of the Education Act 1996;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013;
- Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (the right to an education).

A penalty notice is a fine of up to £120 which may be issued to a parent/carer as a result of their child's regular non-attendance at school.

The LA is responsible for developing a Code of Conduct within which all partners will operate and as part of the statutory duties for ensuring school attendance, it is appropriate that the EWS will assume this responsibility on behalf of the LA.

MTCBC's EWS investigates cases of irregular attendance from school, and following a period of intervention and support, to resolve a concern for non-attendance will, if deemed appropriate instigate legal action. New legislation bringing FPNs offer a means of swift intervention to prevent individual cases becoming entrenched and progressing to the local magistrate's courts.

Prosecution Process

Every case of non-school attendance is dealt with on an individual basis. Welsh Government guidance confirms that before consideration can be given for the prosecution of parents/guardians, that where a SLA, is in place with the school, that the EIO is obliged to make every effort to engage and work with the child and family which includes additional support offered if necessary. Where an SLA, is not in place this remains the responsibility of the school. If after working with the family the attendance does not improve sufficiently, the EWS will decide whether and at which point to instruct legal services to consider prosecution for the offence under section 444(1) and section 444(1a) of the Education Act 1996.

Ultimately, the decision to refer the matter to legal for prosecution lies with the Headteacher of the school, but will be overseen by the Senior Education Welfare Officer (SEWO). These cases normally are when parents refuse to engage or cooperate with either the school or the EWS, or where it is felt that the parents/carers could have done more to improve their child's attendance.

Decisions to instigate legal proceedings in MTCBC are not taken lightly. Consideration will be given as to whether it is appropriate and in the public interest to proceed. All children have a right to be in education and the local authority has a duty to them to make sure that they receive an education.

Warning Notices

Consequences of non-school attendance should be made clear to parents/carers. There are two warnings which are issued to parents which give the parents/carers an opportunity to improve the situation. The expectation is that there will be an improvement in attendance. The parent(s) may be invited to a formal meeting in order to discuss the reasons for non-school attendance.

If, following the second warning, the situation does not improve, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority's legal department. Local authority lawyers will advise the education department whether it is in the public interest to prosecute and will go through the evidence that is presented from the education department. The local authority lawyers will act on behalf of the Authority and present the case in the local Magistrate's Court.

Documentation

Evidence for prosecution has to be provided by the school. Either the school or the EWS, (depending if the school is part of the SLA) will prepare a witness statement outlining the involvement with the pupil and parent(s). This needs to be recorded in first person and checked by the SEWO. A witness statement should include name of pupil, date of birth, name of parent, period of complaint and the

school that the child is registered to attend. The witness statement should exhibit the registration certificate and any other relevant exhibits, including warning letters.

When the matter is referred to the legal department, previous convictions, if appropriate, should be highlighted. Local authority lawyers will assess the evidence and advise whether the matter is suitable for prosecution. If the legal department advise that the matter is suitable for prosecution they will proceed to draft the summons and associated documents and will serve documentation upon the parents.

The case is presented in the Magistrates court by MTCBC lawyers. If the matter progresses to trial or has other complicating features, it may be necessary for the individual who wrote the statement to attend court. The legal department will advise the SEWO if attendance from school or EIO is required in court.

It may be necessary to interview parents under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 in order to ascertain from parents the reasons for non-attendance. The evidence given in interview can then be used as evidence for court if necessary.

School is not usually required to attend court.

Document name	Submitted	Not submitted	Comments and dates
Section 9 statement using template			
Section 9 statement by EWS if required			
Dates of warning letters and copies of letters			
Dates of non-attendance and monitoring period			
Date of FPN			
Court warning letters (A)			
Court warning letters (B)			
Registration certificate			
Narrative/context of the individual for more complex cases			
Details of contact made with family- phone calls, letters, home visits etc			
Is there sufficient evidence to secure a realistic prospect of conviction?			
Is the prosecution in the public interest?			

Management of Data

The Inclusion Team will provide schools and chairs of governors with half termly data packs and suggested actions to improve attendance in order to assist in the targeting of resources.

Appendix 1

Attendance action plan

Subject:	Attendance- Persistent Absenteeism
Start Date:	September
Duration of Plan:	September – July
Officers:	XX
Purpose:	<p>To improve attendance and reduce the numbers of Persistent Absentees.</p> <p>Teachers, inclusion officers and support workers will continue to determine the primary reason(s) for a pupil’s absence and advise specific and bespoke support in addition to the regular implementation of school / LA absence procedures.</p>
Background:	<p>Persistent absenteeism (PA) was identified as a concern in in XX school. In the data was as follows: XX%. It is important to note that this data is slightly inflated due to the pandemic, but PA ha also been an issue in previous years. The focuses below have been designed to impact upon the school named above. However, this action plan is good practice, and a common approach will be used across MTCBC in schools where this is also an issue</p>

Dates	Focus	Planned Actions	Date
01/09/2021	To have a system where all PA information is at hand for the school and FLO to access and analyse the data.	Updated new att data to be available to school on a monthly basis.	
	To ensure that pupils are appropriately supported, and bespoke packages are in place where necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School to follow a graduated response. Weekly analysis of data. Referrals to EHH, Children Services, Vulnerable pupil panel if appropriate. 	
	Make sure that all PAs are targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent Absentee list to be robust and clear with pupil name and reason for absence so appropriate intervention can be given. School to confirm what the PA figure of 12 pupils equates to by class/year group. 	

	offer support for those families who have concerns about returning their child during COVID.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring absences using attendance data, liaising with multi agencies. Meetings between EIO/FLO. 	
	Quick wins to be identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those pupils with absences of 85% and higher to be pursued and absences discussed with families. Number of pupils, how many per class need to return to increase attendance. Raise awareness of the impact of persistent absenteeism. School to use broken weeks report to identify and target support. 	
	Increase the use of statutory interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the cases that can be escalated to FPN/prosecutions. Early intervention is key for cases not to become entrenched. School to unauthorise all absences if not satisfied with reason for absence. 	
	To reduce the number of reduced timetables as impacting on attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust monitoring of the reduced timetable database by LA. Mechanism in place for challenge to school if in place for more than a term. School/FLO to support with the pupils return to school after absence. 	
	To reduce the number of exclusions as impacting on attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust procedure in place to ensure appropriate referrals to BST/outreach and other support agencies. Robust monitoring of the exclusion database by LA. School /FLO to support with the pupils return to school after absence. 	
	Undertake actions as identified as part of the attendance review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	

Appendix 2

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

Welsh Government defines the current persistent absenteeism threshold as pupils whose absence level is more than 10%, (90% or below attendance) in line with the definition currently used in England (from September 2023).

When a student is on his/her way to becoming persistently absent, the school should conduct additional investigations to try to identify the underlying problems and causes of school absence.

Monthly attendance data is collated by the EWS and persistent absenteeism data is sent to schools on a monthly basis in order for schools to analyse and reasons for absence sought, so that the correct support can be put in place for the family in order for improved wellbeing and attendance.

It is hoped, this collaborative approach will reduce persistent absenteeism rates and lessen the need for court action.

See below 'Traffic light attendance information' for guidance on attendance percentages and amount of days lost:

Days	Attendance	Days Lost	Weeks Lost
190	100%	0	
189	99.47%	1	
188	98.95%	2	
187	98.42%	3	
186	97.89%	4	
185	97.37%	5	1 School Week
184	96.84%	6	
183	96.32%	7	
182	95.79%	8	
181	95.26%	9	
180	94.74%	10	2 School Weeks
179	94.21%	11	
178	93.68%	12	
177	93.16%	13	
176	92.63%	14	
175	92.11%	15	3 School Weeks
174	91.58%	16	
173	91.05%	17	
172	90.53%	18	
171	90%	19	
170	89.47%	20	4 School Weeks
169	88.95%	21	

168	88.42%		
167	87.89%		
166	87.37%		
165	86.84%		5 School Weeks
164	86.32%		
163	85.79%		
162	85.26%		
161	84.74%		
160	84.21%		6 School Weeks
159	83.68%		
158	83.16%		
157	82.63%		
156	82.11%		
155	81.58%		7 School Weeks
154	81.05%		
153	80.53%		
152	80%		
151	79.47%		
150	78.95%		8 School Weeks
149	78.42%		
148	77.89	42	

GRADUATED RESPONSE GUIDANCE

Attendance	Non-Attendance	Poor Punctuality
<p>100% - 90% School Action</p>	<p>School's actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect parent/carer to make telephone contact with School on first day of absence • make telephone contact with parent/carer on first day of absence where necessary • generate a 'reason for absence' letter when there is failure to contact; where necessary requesting medical evidence to support continuing 'illness' absences • invite parent/carer in for an interview • issue 'Callio' 'Green Letter' to parents for children with attendance percentages of above 96% • engage FLO to work with pupils and families • undertake a home visit • consider the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in respect of unauthorised absences exceeding five days per term- contact EWS • consider referral to MIA; • issue 'Callio' 'Amber Letter' to parents for children with attendance percentages between 92% and 96% and continue to monitor • issue 'Callio' 'Red Letter' to parents for children with attendance percentages below 92% and continue to monitor <p>Reference - Welsh Government's All Wales Attendance Framework</p> <p>Alerts Where schools have identified pupils with attendance absence 'patterns' from 90% and below and where the strategies utilised by the school have not brought about improvements, then alerts to be discussed with EWS in order to provide advice and guidance on actions.</p>	<p>School's actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue letter to parent/carer • invite parent/carer in for an interview • engage FLO to work with pupils and families • consider the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in respect of high levels of unpunctuality - contact EWS • contact via phone calls • undertake a home visit • make a referral to MIA • carry out a lateness patrol <p>Alerts Where schools have identified pupils with high levels of poor punctuality and where the strategies utilised by the school have not brought about improvements, then alerts to be discussed with EWS in order to provide advice and guidance on actions.</p>

Attendance	Non-Attendance	Poor Punctuality
90% - below School Action Plus	<p>School actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with EWS pupils whose attendance is 90% or below and is a cause of concern. Discuss reasons for absence e.g. health • Agree actions to be undertaken by EWS, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue an FPN • send an A letter <p>NB- continue to liaise with EWS if attendance continues to decline</p> <p>Having made a home visit if no contact has been made with the child or parent/carer then</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirm if either MIA or Social Services are involved and request their support. Please note that any child on the CP register if absent for two consecutive days school should notify Social Services. 2. Contact the Police on 101 requesting a Welfare Check 	<p>School actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with EWS pupils whose punctuality continues to cause concern • Agree actions to be undertaken by EIO, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue an FPN
85% and below	<p>EWS to issue B notice; SEWO and or AIO to advise in respect of commencing Court Action. Time scale between A notice and B notice and B notice and court action should be 10 – 15 school days depending on the individual case.</p> <p><u>Evidence required for case to proceed to prosecution</u></p> <p><u>School to provide-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological contact record of actions taken e.g. phone calls, letters, home visits meetings arranged with family etc • Medical evidence <p><u>EWS to provide-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of A and B Warning Letters • Advice with regards to writing a statement 	

<p>Contact details for EWS</p> <p>Senior Education Welfare Officer- Adele Pugh- 07800 708768</p> <p>Attendance Inclusion Officer- Mia Bounds – 07912 775051</p> <p>FPN Officer Sarah Friel- 01685 724607</p>

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Accurate recording of attendance codes is essential to ensure the safety of all pupils and to meet legal requirements.
- Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day – at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The afternoon registration must take place at the start or during the afternoon session, not at the end of the morning session or during the break between sessions. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance.
- All staff involved with the registration process should be made aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in approved educational activities off site, absent or not required to attend. Where a pupil is of compulsory school age, the register must show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised.
- Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the school as satisfactory justification for absence. Only schools, and not parents/carers, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so. Any absence that is not authorised by the school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Registration procedures need to be clearly outlined in the school's attendance policy and repeated in the staff handbook.

Attendances codes are grouped under five statistical categories as noted in the table below.

Statistical category	Notes
Present	
Approved educational activity	(Treated as present)
Authorised absence	By law only a school can approve absence, not parents/carers.
Unauthorised absence	Absent without the permission of the school.
Not required to attend	Pupils who have not attained the age of five at the start of the term in which the session takes place or were 16 years before the start of the school year in which it takes place.

It is important that:

- all staff have a general understanding of when each code may be used and its statistical meaning;
- staff responsible for entering codes should have a thorough understanding of the issues regarding attendance;
- staff should also be aware of when and to whom they should refer instances of absence in accordance with school guidelines;
- clear guidance also needs to be given on what constitutes 'other authorised circumstances' so that a consistent approach is maintained across the school;
- careful use of codes is paramount to avoid safeguarding issues arising, e.g. where pupils attend education other than at school (EOTAS) provision.

School attendance codes

- The 2010 guidance on school attendance codes provides assistance to schools (including independent schools) and local authorities in the use of codes to record pupil attendance and absence in schools. It relates to attendance at statutory morning and afternoon registration as schools are required to be open to pupils for 190 days in an academic year or 380 sessions.
- Electronic systems support a more consistent approach to collecting school attendance data across Wales, allowing greater potential for exploring further the reasons why pupils are absent, improving the safeguarding and tracking of pupils and in turn putting in place strategies to deal effectively with specific problems.
- The use of fixed codes assists schools, local authorities and Welsh Government in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without the permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school. They can use this information to formulate interventions to address deteriorating attendance, poor attendance, persistent absence and other issues that the data reveals. Education welfare officers (EWOs) should investigate and challenge variations in the use of attendance codes.
- Estyn has identified that schools that have both quality assurance procedures in place (with a member of the senior management team responsible for overseeing the coding of attendance) and good systems in place to analyse data are able to adapt their approaches to improve attendance.
- The guidance may be used in conjunction with systems to record attendance in lesson-by-lesson systems, but schools may find that they need to record other reasons in this type of system. However, in schools where such systems are used and the first lesson in the morning or any session in the afternoon is used to substitute for the morning and afternoon registration, the codes in this guidance must be used for those sessions.

Computerised registers

- Schools may use computers to maintain attendance and admission registers but, in common with manual registers, if the computer package allows, the appropriate change to the original entry in a register and any subsequent correction must be clearly distinguishable. The original entry must not be replaced by the corrected entry. Both the original entry and the correction should be preserved so that, on retrieval, the entries appear in chronological order. Prints of the register must clearly distinguish between the original entry and the corrected entry.
- Schools using computers for attendance registration must make a hard copy of the attendance register at least once a month. As soon as practicable after the end of the school year the printed sheets must be bound into annual volumes and, as with manual registers, retained for a period of not less than four years after the end of the school year to which each volume relates. This would mean that Year 11 pupils would have attendance records from Year 7. Electronic records should be readily accessible to authorised officers, such as EWOs, to allow easy checking of individual pupils' attendance patterns

LATENESS

Registration Code: U	
Brief Description	Late (after registration closed)
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Late for session
Use	Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

Additional useful information

This code should be used when a pupil has arrived after the close of registration with no relevant reason to code it otherwise.

Example:

- a. If a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) due to a doctor or dentist appointment, the code M would be used.
- b. If a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) because they couldn't find their shoes/their school uniform was drying in the tumble dryer/their younger sibling was playing up etc, the code U would be used.

The Assembly Government advises that schools should close the register to pupils **30 minutes after the start of the session**. It also advises schools against leaving the register open for the whole session (see Code L and Code U).

Schools and LAs have asked if all schools could have an agreed time for the close of registration. This is not possible due to the individual needs of each school and a school's power to set different session times for different pupils (see below).

For health and safety reasons, schools need to be aware of where pupils are, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session. This might be achieved through a paper system in the school office to record that a pupil has arrived on the school premises during the session. "Lesson monitoring" can also help with this process.

Under the School Day and School Year Regulations, schools can set different session times for different pupils, such as during public examinations and setting different lesson times for pupils in exclusions units. However, they must have regard to the Assembly Government advice on the minimum taught time for pupils and the requirement to offer 380 sessions. Where schools set different session times, they should close the register 30 minutes after the register was called for that group of pupils. For example, if the main school day started at 8.30am but the exclusion unit started at 9.30am:

- the register for the main school should close at 9.00am; and
- the register for the exclusion unit will close at 10.00am.

(See also Code L)

For safeguarding and educational reasons, schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence in a timely manner, such as through “First Day Calling” procedures.

Registration Code: L	
Brief Description	Late (before registers closed)
Statistical Meaning	Present
Legal Meaning	Present
Physical Meaning	Late for session
Use	Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival, which could provide grounds for prosecution. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

GUIDANCE ON CODES

The recommended codes are grouped under the following five statistical categories:

- present;
- approved educational activity (treated as present);
- authorised absence;
- unauthorised absence;
- not required to attend.

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
∧	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity
J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	authorised absence
I	Illness	authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	authorised absence
S	Study leave	authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	unauthorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	unauthorised absence
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	not required to attend
Y	Partial and forced closure	not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	not required to attend

Guidance on the use of Welsh Governments 'B' and 'D' codes - August 2014

Purpose

The aim of this guidance is to;

- provide assistance to schools in the accurate use of the 'B' and 'D' codes
- enable schools to record accurately pupil attendance and absence
- ensure a consistent approach across the LA.

The guidance applies to recording attendance at both statutory registration sessions i.e. morning and afternoon. Regular and punctual attendance is vital for all pupils for educational and safeguarding reasons and any signs of disengagement need to be highlighted and addressed promptly. The correct use of codes enables schools and LA officers to monitor attendance effectively.

LA Role

Attendance data will continue to be monitored and analysed by the Education Welfare Service on a monthly basis. This will include in depth analysis of the use of the 'B' and 'D' codes. Overall findings will be sent to schools. Audits will be undertaken each term in each school. A written audit report will be provided for each school in order for the Headteacher to ensure the appropriate coding and marking of registers and for corrections to be made where appropriate. Should it be found that a school does not apply the registration codes correctly then it would result in the following actions;

- The written audit report will be sent to the Chair of Governors and to the Chief Education Officer.
- The Chief Education Officer may call for an investigation, the outcomes of which would be reported to the LA's Scrutiny Committee.

Overview

There are three categories of code

- Approved Educational Activity i.e. child is **present**
- Authorised absence
- Unauthorised absence

For a child to be counted as attending school the approved educational activity must be **supervised**. Schools may wish to provide work for children to undertake while not at school and this can have some benefits. However as the activity is not supervised the child must be recorded as absent - authorised or unauthorised. Please refer to notes later in the document under 'When **not** to use the B code'.

Registration Code: B Statistical Category: Approved Educational Activity

The information below is drawn from the Welsh Guidance June 2010. The key aspect is that the 'B' code applies where the pupil is **supervised**.

Registration Code: B	
Brief Description	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Legal Meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Where a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off-site at a supervised activity approved by the school.

For educational and safeguarding reasons, schools must ensure that they update their attendance records in line with those sent to them by the provider of an alternative off site activity so that any absences by individual pupils can be monitored and addressed accordingly.

Approved Educational Activity must be **supervised by someone approved** by the school. It must also take place during the session for which the mark is recorded. This code must not be used when pupils are attending alternative provision on the school's premises.

Examples of when this code would be used are:

- attending taster days at other schools;
- pupils attending another school as 'guest pupils' (note a pupil who attends another school as part of a regular pattern must be dual registered – see Code D);
- pupils attending vocational courses at college;
- pupils attending alternative provision arranged and or agreed by the school;
- pupils undertaking work experience as part of an alternative curriculum or alternative provision (pupils undertaking work experience under section 560 of the Education Act 1996 should be recorded under Code W);
- Special tuition is provided for pupils with longer term health problems which prevent them from attending school. However, it should be noted that the attendance of these pupils should reflect that as provided by the LA.

When not to use the B code

- Schools should not use this code if a pupil has an agreed **part-time timetable** as part of reintegration or transition. The school are authorising the absence for the sessions that the pupil is not required to be in school and the pupil should be recorded as **Code C** for those sessions. Whilst part-time timetables are a useful technique to help pupils adapt or re-adapt to the school setting, they have the effect of reducing the sessions on offer to those pupils to under the minimum 380 sessions and therefore should be used as a short term measure only.
- Schools should not use this code to record **study leave**. Study leave is unsupervised time away from school for pupils to prepare for their public examinations and many pupils treat such time as extra holidays and do no study. Study leave is unsupervised and schools cannot assume that it took place during the school session; pupils should be recorded as **Code S**.
- Schools should **not** use this code when children are **not in school** and have been provided with work e.g. work packs. The school must use the appropriate code when children are not in school i.e.

- **C** - Other authorised exceptional circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
- **I** - Illness
- **E** - Excluded but no alternative provision made
- **N** - No reason for the absence provided yet
- **O** - Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)

Statistical Category – Dual registered – (attending two Registered Educational Establishments)

Registration Code: D	
Brief Description	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending another Registered Educational Establishment)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Legal Meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. Where a pupil is dually registered at institution X and Y, institution X marks the pupil approved educational activity while they are attending institution Y and vice-versa. Both institutions share responsibility for the child. Failure to attend either institution at the proper time without good reason is unauthorised absence.

Additional useful information

This code is to be used when a pupil is dually registered at two schools or registered provisions and, for the session in question, they are not required to attend your school. The school where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil’s attendance and pursuing non-attendance.

This code can be used for Traveller children when it is known that:

- they are attending another school; **and**
- are dually registered at both schools.

Schools/registered provisions should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the ‘host’ school and alternate school/registered provision where the pupil is scheduled to attend, update in respect of any absences so that both schools can record accurately the pupil’s absence using the relevant code.

For safeguarding and educational reasons, the school in which the pupil is expected to attend that session must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences.

Statistical Category: Authorised Absence

Registration Code: C	
Brief Description	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Special occasions at the discretion of the school

Additional useful information

(These examples are illustrative and not meant to be exhaustive.)

Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- the nature of the event for which leave is sought;
- its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?);
- whether the parent gave advance notice; and
- the pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Examples might include special occasions such as attending the wedding of a family member, family bereavement, and prison visits.

Public Performances

Where a pupil is absent because they are taking part in a public performance, it is still the school which decides whether to authorise the absence, even if the pupil is being employed under a licence issued by a local authority.

Young Carers

In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school should set a time limit for the absence and set some school work so the pupil does not fall behind while at home.

Birth of a Child

- Support should be directed to keeping the pupil in school wherever possible, and to return her to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth.
- A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorized.

At the request of the school

A pupil has been placed on an agreed part-time timetable e.g. as part of a staggered intake or reintegration package.

Registration Code: F	
Brief Description	Extended Family Holiday (agreed)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	<p>Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term time. They must apply for leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress. Schools should invite parents to discuss any proposed holiday in term time.</p> <p>Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances. Pupils who fail to return to school within 10 days of the end of extended leave of absence may be deleted if both the school and LA fail to locate them and they do not have good reason to be absent.</p>

Additional useful information:

This category is for the whole of an extended holiday where the Headteacher has agreed there are exceptional circumstances.

A pupil who takes 10 days holiday (whether authorised or not) in an academic year will only attain **94.7%** attendance (for primary schools). A pupil who takes 10 days holiday during the period of September – May (the annual Assembly Government absence survey time period) will only attain **93.8%** (for secondary schools).

Parents must apply in advance to take holidays or overseas trips in term time. Requests should be considered individually and schools should invite parents to discuss any such proposals. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday or trip if they believe there are special circumstances that warrant it. If a school agrees absence and the pupil goes on holiday or trip for 10 days or less, absence is authorised (use code H). A school can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances. If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on the holiday or trip, absence is unauthorised (Code G). If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is also recorded as unauthorised (Code G).

By adopting a unified approach to discouraging holidays taken during term time it is hoped that it will continue to raise your attendance.

As of January 1st 2015 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) can be issued, at the discretion of the Headteacher, for a period of unauthorised absence, some of which may include unauthorised holidays.

We believe that a common approach will prove supportive for Headteachers in respect of the authorising of holidays and absences in general during term time. As Headteachers have the discretion to authorise holidays in exceptional circumstances, if the school considers that there are exceptional circumstances why the pupil should be granted approval for an overseas trip of more than 10 days, the approval can be given and the absence would be authorised and recorded under Code F. The use of a different code shows that an extended overseas trip should have a cultural justification other than for a holiday. In these cases, the school should explain the following to parents:

- advance application for term time absence must be made in line with school attendance policy
- the absence should be planned carefully with the school – leave and return date to be agreed
- the school will make the decision if the visit will be authorised or not
- where possible, extended visits should be made during school holidays
- outline the possible detrimental affect it could have on the learner’s progress
- examination periods should be avoided
- explain the amount of school work that would be missed and how the school can provide a study pack which the family could help the learner to complete
- explore the possible educational benefits of the visit but also the wellbeing benefits, particularly for children of diaspora families.

As always holidays are granted at the discretion of the Headteacher, however, whether authorised or not these are still absences and therefore should only be granted for exceptional circumstances and be based upon the knowledge of the individual case.

The information below illustrates which code should be used.

Registration Code: G	
Brief Description	Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
Statistical Meaning	Unauthorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time and must apply for the leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress. Schools should invite parents in to school to discuss any proposed holiday in term time. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances.

Registration Code: H	
Brief Description	Family Holiday (agreed)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent

Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time and parents must apply for the leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress; and whether circumstances warrant it. Schools should invite parents to discuss any proposed holiday in term time. Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are exceptional circumstances.

Registration Code: M	
Brief Description	Medical/Dental appointments
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Legal Meaning	Absent
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is authorised absence. Parents and pupils should be encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Sight of an appointment card is advisable if a pupil is an irregular attender. If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, no absence need be recorded for that session. Schools should keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency. A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'.

Additional useful information

For Health and Safety reasons a system must be in place to record that a pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during the session. Medical appointments include:

- attendance at a GP's surgery;
- attendance at a dentist's surgery; and
- hospital appointments (not a stay in hospital, for which Code I should be used).

Registration Code: V	
Brief Description	Educational visit or trip
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Legal Meaning	Attending approved educational activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Use	School organised trips and visits, including residential trips. Can also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by other organisations, provided they are supervised.

Additional useful information

Approved Educational Activity must be supervised by someone approved by the school. It must also take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Registration Code: Y	
Brief Description	Forced and Partial Closure
Statistical Meaning	Not counted in possible attendances
Legal Meaning	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or not attending because the pupils have a different school year to other pupils in the school.
Physical Meaning	Not required to be in school
Use	Where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause or the transport provided by the school or local authority for pupils (who do not live with walking distance) is not available. Or where the school has different term dates for different groups of pupils.

Closed due to unavoidable cause

For the purposes of recording attendance and absence, “official transport” is that arranged and funded by the school or local authority such as dedicated buses, taxis and public transport passes.

Examples include:

- road conditions make some roads impassable with the result that the school bus or taxi can only collect some of the pupils;
- public transport not available to those issued with passes due to major incident;
- burst boiler;
- floods; and damage.

GUIDELINES FOR MODEL POLICY

Schools are required to develop a whole school policy on attendance in discussion with staff, the Governing Body, parents and pupils, taking account of Welsh Assembly Government’s guidance on Inclusion and Pupil Support, and the belonging, engaging and participation guidance 2023 and good practice identified by the Local Authority. A whole school approach to attendance should be adopted reflecting the importance of early intervention, and this policy should:

- give a high priority to attendance and punctuality, ensuring compliance with all statutory requirements;
- promote the importance of attendance to pupils through school assemblies; competitions, incentives, displays, peer mentoring, role models and other restorative approaches;
- set a whole school target for attendance;
- consider the setting of targets for individuals, classes and year group;
- develop attendance incentive schemes which recognise pupils’ attendance achievements;
- identify a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance; track and monitor attendance patterns;
- monitor post-registration truancy through the taking of class registers and spot checks;
- identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism / lateness;
- establish procedures for identifying and reintegrating long-term absentees;
- provide clear guidance to staff on the process of registration and on the appropriate coding of absences; making provision for first day response in respect of absences and contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absences and lateness;
- stress to parents the importance of the continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time. (Authorising of leave for term time holidays remains at the discretion of the Headteacher).
- use opportunities such as parents’ evenings and the school prospectus/brochure to remind parents of the school policy on attendance, e.g. Callio;
- ensure that all reasonable steps are taken by the school before an appropriate referral is made to the EIO;
- provide for regular structured meetings between staff responsible for school attendance and the EIO.

(Name of School)

(Name of Policy)

Date Agreed: _____

Next Review:

Co-ordinator
(if applicable):

Signature:

(Chairperson)

Introduction

Why regular attendance is important

The role of the parent/care in promoting regular attendance and the support available from the school

Named person with responsibility for attendance within the school

Understanding types of absence

Authorised absences

Unauthorised absences (*see page x of the LA attendance handbook for further details*)

Absence procedures

Set out what parents/carers need to do when their child is absent, e.g. phone to notify the school,

Set out what the school will do when the child is absent, e.g. first day contact.

Lateness

Stress importance of punctuality

Set out the times for the school, e.g.

The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by **8.55am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

Holidays during term time

Set out the factors that will need to be considered when granting leave of absence for holidays during term time.

Set out the process for parents to apply for holidays during term time, including any standard forms, letters and period of notice

What will happen if leave is taken without authorisation, E.G. the issuing of a fixed penalty notice, at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Education Inclusion Service

Who is the officer for the school?

Set out the circumstances in which referrals will be made to the EWO

Contact details

School projects and initiatives to raise attendance

What the school will do to promote regular attendance, e.g.

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in your regular home – school bulletin.
- Report to parents/carers at least half termly on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

(For more information please see page x of the LA attendance handbook)

School attendance data and targets

Set out what the school does to monitor data.

It would be useful to include some previous data on performance, e.g. as provided in the EIO governing body reports.

Set out what the school's attendance target is, e.g.

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Our target for xxx is to achieve xx% attendance.

Headteacher

Chair of Governors

Chair of School Council

GOOD PRACTICE FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

1. Self-evaluation audit

Having received responses from all schools the following good practice has been shared with schools:

- Schools challenging voicemail messages left on absence lines from parents.
- EIO present at parent afternoons to offer support and guidance on attendance and wellbeing.
- scrutinise specific cohort/vulnerable groups –to address identified issues with specific year group cohort.
- Develop the family engagement policy as part of the attendance policy.
- Measure the impact of attendance interventions on pupil outcomes rather than just measuring an improvement in attendance
- Develop a pupil friendly attendance policy.
- Pupil voice and attendance ambassadors to promote attendance.
- Reward Schemes are in place. This is an area to be taken forward by the school counsel.
- Letters to be issued to parents informing them of the registration period/ lateness.
- Attendance to be discussed weekly by SLT and during every staff meeting to ensure whole staff involvement.

2. Strategies being trialled in Merthyr schools

As with any approach these are most effective when implemented consistently as a whole school

- Attendance included SDP as a target
- Have a designated member of staff responsible for attendance
- Carry out timely First Day Response actions
- Routinely request medical evidence
- Challenging absences and setting expectations for return to school date
- Close monitoring and analysis of data
- Address attendance at higher threshold i.e. 95-90%
- Make home visits and invite parents in to discuss attendance
- High visible praise of good attendance
- Weekly awards; shorter periods proved to be more effective for those harder to reach
- Rewards for staff & students
- Pupil engagement e.g. Pupil Attendance Champion and/or Committee
- Timetables for the end of term shared with pupils and parents
- Internal competitions e.g. between classes
- All staff being aware of their role in respect of attendance
- Use every opportunity to raise the profile of attendance e.g. Discos & school fetes
- Individual target plans – agree short but achievable actions with parents
- Show parents what their child's attendance as a percentage equates to as days lost
- Send Callio type letters to parents

- Wellbeing wall- names and photos of pupils for whom attendance is an issue
- Information sent to parents - Newsletters, website, text etc.
- Involvement of governors and PTA in attendance
- Unauthorise absences if dissatisfied with reason given, or when no reason is given for an absence, so that a FPN warning letter can be sent at the earliest opportunity
- Agree an approach to the issuing of FPNs as a cluster of schools for consistency
- Clear times given to parents for the registration period
- Walk the mile in the morning
- Walk to school bus
- Encourage breakfast club or pre-school day activities
- Engagement with the local community in supporting school attendance

3. Strategies of effective practice as identified by Estyn in the thematic report “Effective practice in improving attendance in primary schools”

The following strategies have been identified as good practice in improving attendance and would recommend that these be trialled in schools with their effectiveness monitored.

- **The “5 full weeks” initiative**

St Monica’s Primary School in Cardiff uses a number of innovative and effective reward programmes to highlight attendance and to engage pupils.

- ✓ **The ‘5 full weeks’ initiative** rewards pupils who attend school for five weeks with no absence during one term. **This is effective as even if a pupil misses one day, then they are still able to get a reward as they start their five weeks again.**
- ✓ The school holds raffles on random days where each child in attendance on that day receives a raffle ticket, which gives them a chance to win stationery.
- ✓ The award of a ‘green certificate’ (in line with the traffic-light system) for pupils with over 95% attendance encourages those with only a few days of absence.

Results from the ‘5 whole weeks’ campaign demonstrate an increasing number of pupils with full attendance for the five weeks:

- ✓ 38% of pupils with full attendance in the five weeks in the autumn term
- ✓ 62% of pupils with full attendance in the five weeks in the spring term
- ✓ 75% of pupils with full attendance in the five weeks in the summer

- **Pupil engagement “learning squad”**

Pupil involvement at Herbert Thompson Primary School, Cardiff

School leaders identified that absences for holidays during term time were not significant, but absence due to illness was a major contributor to weak attendance rates overall.

Strategy

The school developed a wide range of strategies to improve attendance that included:

- ✓ engaging parents more fully in the life of the school
- ✓ improving support mechanism for parents

- ✓ improving the way the school responds to the pupil voice and the role pupils play in improving attendance
- ✓ developing a clear whole-school structure for managing attendance
- ✓ improving information for parents on attendance, including a clear and easily understood policy

Attendance has been a priority in the school improvement plan for most of the last five years and remains in the plan even though attendance rates place the school in the top 25% or top 50% when compared with similar schools.

The school has developed a 'learning squad' comprised of Year 5 pupils who act as pupil representatives to support school leaders with school improvement. Two of the squad support the drive to improve attendance. Each term, these pupils work with around 20 pupils that the school identifies as needing to improve their attendance.

Action

Each morning, the learning squad visits the 20 pupils during registration and gives them a sticker if they are present. They aim to encourage these pupils to have full attendance for the week. If successful, they are able to attend a Friday lunchtime club, specifically set up for them.

The club is organised and run by senior staff and the learning squad. Twice each half-term, the learning squad and targeted pupils decide what activities they would like to undertake in their club, for example art and craft. Pupils may also choose to act as play leaders for pupils in the Reception class during club time.

Actions taken also include:

- ✓ having a weekly focus in morning briefings on attendance, which allows teachers to discuss individual pupils and to identify any support or challenge that they may require
- ✓ sending out attendance leaflets every half-term to all parents reminding them of the school's attendance targets and the importance of attendance
- ✓ making attendance information easy for parents to understand by giving parents their child's individual attendance rate but also using a traffic light system to show parents whether the level of attendance is good enough or not
- ✓ monitoring by the deputy Headteacher, in the role of the school's inclusion leader, when pupils' attendance falls below 90% making sure that all teachers have a learning review with the inclusion leader each term which also focuses on individual pupils' attendance
- ✓ establishing an attendance tracker where actions for individual pupils are monitored carefully by the inclusion leader

The school has established a **parents' council**, made up of two parents from each year group. They form a support network for parents and are at the school on a daily basis. Individuals can approach them to ask for help or discuss issues. One of their goals is to improve attendance.

Impact

The school's detailed tracking of pupils shows that their strategies have helped to make a measurable and significant impact on improving the attendance of identified pupils. For example, in one term, the school targeted 32 pupils with attendance of below 80% (half with attendance of less than 75%). Of these, 29 improved their attendance notably. Twelve pupils (over a third) achieved attendance of over 90% and eight pupils (a quarter) had attendance of over 95%. Four

pupils achieved 100% attendance for the term. The average improvement in attendance was 17 percentage points. The impact of all the school's strategies on whole-school attendance has been to lift the school into the top 25% or higher 50% when compared with similar schools.

- **“Extra play”** initiative as used in neighbouring LAs

Strategy

Visits having been undertaken to other LA's, in respect of 'Good Practice' in relation to primary attendance a 'reward package' of **“Extra play”** has been identified, which is proving to be effective. It costs nothing, and is improving school attendance levels across the authorities' primary schools.

Pupils in each class are encouraged to improve their attendance, and peer pressure amongst the class is found to be more productive than other forms of 'support' or encouragement.

Each week a **high profile attendance assembly highlights the attendance of each class**, this being in the form of a presentation in front of the whole school for 5th place' up to 1st place'; these being given praise and ovation, and reward trophy (which all schools already have). Additionally the reward for the 'best attending class' is having **an extra 10 minutes at break/lunchtime in the playground each day** for the commencing week. This emphasises to the remaining classes that the best attendees stay out to play when the remaining classes go back in; this has been found to promote better attendance in all schools that are utilising it.

Obviously those pupils with genuine issues that may stop them regularly attending are removed statistically from the class attendance, so as not to discriminate the remaining class members.

GUIDANCE AND EXEMPLAR POLICY ON ABSCONDING

The purpose of this policy is to set out clearly for all stakeholders, the process that will take place should a child abscond from school.

To abscond is to 'leave without permission'.

Under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in Common Law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care towards their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times throughout the school day and during school led activities.

Where a pupil, present at formal registration, is found to be absent from school without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Member of staff to inform "On Call" member of SLT, pastoral office and main office.
- "On Call" member organises search of buildings and known places that the pupil may have gone to.
- If the pupil is not found then all available staff to complete a more thorough sweep of the school and check the perimeter of the grounds.
- School office to phone the police when area has been fully checked if the child is not found.
- School office to contact parents/carers and Social Services if involved, to inform them of the situation.
- Consideration will be given to whether the search should be extended beyond the school perimeter. This decision will be based on staff's knowledge of the child and on the levels of risk, and on what action is in the child's best interests.
- Any staff who leaves school grounds to take mobile phone to contact school.
- Once a pupil has been found then the lead SLT member will use their professional judgement to outline the response towards the pupil and what support the pupil will need in the future.
- A written report will be filed on the incident.
- Member of SLT to brief police and parents.

Where a pupil attempts or is seen to be leaving the school premises without authorisation the following procedures should be followed:

- Staff must follow the student to the perimeter fence or gate and must try to persuade the student to stay in the school.
- If a student deemed to be a high risk to himself or other people then staff should adhere to the **Positive Behaviour Management Guidance** with reference to holding the student, if appropriate.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the student to leave the immediate vicinity of the school and may also cause the pupil to panic, possibly putting him or herself at risk by running onto a busy road, for example.
- If the student has left the immediate vicinity of the school the school office and SLT members must be contacted immediately and the lead person will direct the course of action.
- Staff will follow the student and engage in a local search, following the student at a safe distance if in view, **but not chase**.

- The SLT lead may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone to contact school.
- The school office will contact the student's parents/carers.
- If in the searching staff lose sight of the student they must contact the school office giving details of their location and the clothes which the student is wearing.

If the pupil(s) has left the immediate vicinity of the school grounds and is no longer visible then the SLT will make a decision as to how to take matters further which will take into account the age of the student, the prevailing weather conditions, the nature of the incident which led to the pupil absconding, the pupil's previous history of being involved in episodes of absconding and their outcomes. If the student returns of their own volition, parents/carers and the police will be informed as soon as possible.

Upon his or her return to school, and when the student is calm, the student must be seen by the SLT so that the reasons for absconding may be discussed in detail. At this point a decision will be made as to the appropriateness of further actions. A written report will be filed on the incident.

Example School Procedure if a child is missing / absconds

Staff member informs SLT / Head that pupil is possibly missing / absconding

Staff check location of pupil / if pupil still on premises by:

- Asking office staff to check CCTV
- Staff check last known location, known hiding points / calm down areas / areas pupil may regularly go to if absconding
- Staff members man any points of easy exit from school grounds / building whilst others sweep building / grounds systematically (add specifics here for your site e.g. one end to other, first to ground floor, outside edges of playground to middle)

Pupil not found on the premises

Pupil sighted leaving the premises

Pupil is found on the grounds / premises

Staff leave premises to search / follow if safe to do so

Pupil deliberately absconded

Pupil accidentally lost / misplaced

- Staff inform parents by phone to alert them and maintain contact
- Staff inform the police

- SLT and other staff informed

Pupil is found

Pupil refuses to come in / go to Head

Pupil comes in / goes to Head

- *Parents, pupil and police (if appropriate) attend school to discuss the matter. This should be done as soon as possible.*

- Keep watch from discrete distance (if applicable)
- Call parents
- Pupil and parent discuss matter with Head

Investigate incident, determine how it happened and any lessons to be learnt. Take action to prevent recurrence and amend pupil and site risk assessments to reflect any changes.

Guidance on Dealing with Children who Abscond - 2017

Introduction

Under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974 and in common law, schools and other education settings owe a duty of care toward their pupils. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that pupils are safe and remain within the care of the school at all times through the school day and during school led activities. The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a framework for schools to develop their individual policy and procedures for dealing with pupils who abscond.

Definition

To abscond is to “leave without permission”.

Internal Absconding	External Absconding
Internal absconding – where the pupil leaves the care of the responsible person without permission but remains on the school site.	External Absconding – where a pupil leaves the school site without permission.
Where a pupil leaves a lesson without permission but remains on the school site.	Where a pupil leaves an offsite provision without permission. e.g. curriculum swimming, alternate education provision, etc.
Where the pupil leaves a club, run on behalf of the school, without permission but remains on site.	Where a pupil leaves a defined area or supervision of the responsible adult without permission. e.g. when undertaking fieldwork or on an educational visit.
	Where the pupil leaves the designated transport provided for them without permission. e.g. transport between split sites, to and from specialist provision.

Control measures and procedures to prevent absconding.

In order to prevent a child from absconding from the site, a school should consider the following measures. These are suggested control measures and each school would have to consider which are suitable for their provision.

Site Security

- The site should have a secure perimeter and gates which can be locked.
- Gates/doors should be secured outside of your stated drop off and pick up times.
- Unsecured gates should be locked during break times if there is a significant risk of absconding.
- Doors into school should be locked from the outside with key coded access or similar.

Effective Supervision

- Effective supervision is dependent on a number of factors including
 - Age of the pupils
 - Ability of the pupils
 - Number of the pupils
 - Activities being undertaken
 - Pupil behaviour

- Site layout and security
- Specific identified risks e.g. pupils with history of absconding, public rights of way through School grounds, building work etc.
- Schools should mark on a plan of the school where supervisors should be placed.
- Regular head counts should take place through the school day.
- Ensure there is a robust system in place for pupils to be handed over to their parents, especially in Early Years and KS1.
- Ensure there is a clear system in place for pupils who need to leave the school grounds with permission during the school day e.g. lunchtimes, medical appointments.
- Ensure there is a clear system for handing pupils over to before/after school clubs.

Actions to be taken in the event of a child absconding

Due to large variation in school settings it would not be practical to produce a definitive flowchart of actions that could be utilised by all provisions. Any action taken must be proportionate to the risk and in the best interest of the child. Schools should draw up their own written policy on pupils absconding, and this must encompass the points below.

- A system for notifying SLT immediately. This system must NOT place the remaining pupils at risk.
- A procedure for securing and systematically searching the site in the event of a child absconding and their whereabouts being unknown.
- A system for notifying the parents / carers, Social Services (if involved) and the Police if a child is known to have left the school site, or they cannot be found.
- Follow up actions to be taken once a child has been found. These should include a written record of the incident.
- The system above should cover educational visits and transport where relevant.

The School policy must not state that pupils will **never** be followed out of school as this could put staff in a position where they have neglected their duty of care. However, neither should they **chase** the pupil. The decision on whether or not to follow a child out of school or initiate a search out of school should be made in consultation with SLT and should be based on a dynamic risk assessment.

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to use reasonable physical interventions to prevent a child from putting themselves at risk. Schools should already have a care and control policy in place in respect of physical intervention, which will provide more detail. Termly returns for such incidents are to be sent to the Inclusion Manager in the LA.

POLICY

Parent Involvement Policy

Step-By-Step Guide

Developing a parent involvement policy is a great way to ensure a sustainable and effective approach to engaging all parents. The policy should include information on how the school will address communication, parenting, skills, children’s learning, volunteering, school decision making and community involvement. This document takes you through a step-by-step approach to help create your parent involvement policy.

STEP 1: Aims

Aims are general statements about the overall goals, ends or intentions of the school. Objectives are the individual stages that your school must achieve on the way in order to reach these goals. Aims are general; objectives are specific.

To the side are a few examples of what you can include in this section.

Aims

Aims of our school:

- To promote parent involvement in children’s learning and the life of the school.
- To enhance the learning experiences of all pupils.
- To encourage parents and carers to be involved in their children’s learning.
- To ensure that maximum use is made of parents’ and other family members’ skills and experience to enrich learning opportunities.
- To support parents as their children’s first and most important educators.
- To involve parents in the life of the pre-school and their children’s education.
- To support parents in their own continuing education and personal development.
- To provide a partnership between home and school, seeking to ensure that families feel welcome and valued.

AIMS:

Objectives

Below are a few examples:

- Create an atmosphere that is respectful and positive towards everyone in the school – children, parents/carers and staff.
- Maintain an 'open door' approach so that parents can communicate with staff regularly.
- Foster an ethos and atmosphere where all parents feel welcome and valued.
- Work with parents to promote positive behaviour at home and at school.
- Seek to provide a range of opportunities throughout the year to invite families into school.
- Provide information in timely, specific, targeted and accessible ways so that parents feel confident to support their children's learning.
- Seek parents' views and opinions and act upon them.
- Provide support and encouragement for families with difficulties or barriers to involvement.
- Work with parents to promote positive behaviour at home and at school.
- Provide a range of activities, courses and workshops, to promote parent involvement in children's learning and 'lifelong learning' for children and adults alike.

STEP 2: Objectives

Objectives are the steps you are going to take to achieve your school's aims. Highlight how your aims are to be accomplished. Objectives should be specific statements that define measurable outcomes (i.e. what steps will be taken to achieve the desired outcome). When writing your objectives, try to use strong, positive statements.

OBJECTIVES:

Communication

STEP 3: Communication

In this section inform parents how you intend to communicate with them. Maintaining effective two-way communication to deal with behaviour, attendance, interests, activities and other school-based events, including any external trips or visits, is very important. To the right are a few examples of what you can include.

- **Parent teacher meetings:** Inform parents that these are organised on an annual basis. Additional meetings can be facilitated throughout the year. Remember to include the dates, times, etc.
- **Annual report:** Inform parents that a report of each child's academic and personal development is provided to parents each year. An acknowledgement slip is attached, and parents are welcome to request a meeting with the teacher if they wish to discuss the report. Remember to include the date when reports are sent out and how to request a meeting with the teacher.
- **Newsletter:** Inform parents that the newsletter is produced by the parent teacher association to communicate with its members about its activities and school life and events. The Head Teacher approves the content and can also contribute content. Remember to include the dates when these newsletters will be sent to parents and how parents whose first language is not English can access these newsletters in their own language.
- **Notes home:** Inform parents that notes home for younger children are handed directly to the parent. All other notes are given to the children or recorded in the child's diary. Additional information can be written here – for example, parents are required to sign the journal and comments are welcomed.
- **Parent requested meeting:** Inform parents that the procedure to follow if they need to meet with the class teacher, learning support/resource teacher or Head Teacher is included in the welcome booklet. Parents are also made aware of this procedure on an information night.
- **Open days:** Inform parents that the arrangements for enrolment, class open days, displays, etc. will be communicated through notes or letters home, the school, website or the notice board.
- **Home-school agreement:** Inform all new parents that they will receive a copy of the home-school agreement, which they are asked to sign. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of parents, the children and the school, which all parties are expected to honour.

COMMUNICATION:

Parenting

- **Parent support facilitator:** Inform parents that this member of staff provides support on areas including behaviour and attendance. Remember to include the name of the member of staff and when he/she is available.
- **Parent workshops:** Involve parents in activities and workshops to promote their involvement in their children's learning, and also lifelong learning for both children and adults (e.g. sports/fun/craft activities at mums' nights and dads' nights, family learning events such as healthy lifestyles and child safety).
- **Parenting and family support:** Inform parents of the signpost services providing information about holiday activities, child care, local community events, parenting courses, e-safety, and services providing support and encouragement for families suffering difficulties/crises or barriers to involvement. Make this service accessible and approachable to parents to voice their concerns, issues and opinions.
- **Parenting programmes:** Involve parents in the parenting programme to help them develop skills such as communication, routines, having fun with their child, etc. Remember to inform when and where it will be held.

STEP 4: Parenting

In this section include information and ideas for parents to help create a positive learning environment at home as well as the best ways of supporting the school and their child's education. To the left are a few examples of what you can include.

PARENTING:

Children's Learning

STEP 5: Children's Learning

In this section include information and training for parents to help with their child's education on issues such as homework. Alongside are a few examples of what you can include.

- **Parent teacher meetings:** Inform parents that these take place on an annual basis. Additional meetings can be facilitated throughout the year. Remember to include the dates, times, etc.
- **Annual report:** Inform parents that a report of each child's academic and personal development is provided once a year. An acknowledgement slip is attached, and parents may request a meeting with their child's teacher if they wish to discuss the report. Remember to include the date when reports are sent out.
- **Home-school reading record book:** Inform parents of the home-school reading record book. This can also include a homework diary in which parents are encouraged to make comments. Parents can talk with teachers briefly before and after school on an informal basis on most days. If more time is needed, then an appointment can be made for a more appropriate time. Remember to include how parents can make an appointment.
- **Formal discussion:** Inform parents that there are opportunities to have a formal discussion with their children's teacher each term. Teachers value these opportunities to celebrate pupils' successes, review learning targets, listen to parents' views and review Individual Education/Behaviour Plans where relevant.
- **Home-school communication books:** Inform parents that these books provide communication between home and school, detailing specific daily updates and requirements from both settings.
- **Assemblies:** Invite parents to class/school assemblies so that the children can share their work.
- **Curriculum workshops:** Involve parents in curriculum workshops to help them to support their child/children's learning.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING:

Volunteering

- **Reading in class:** Provide opportunities for parents to help with reading in class.
- **Parent welcome pack:** Give parents the opportunity to help compile a welcome pack for new parents – a pack for parents, written by parents. Remember to let them know how they can get involved.
- **School fact card:** Encourage parents to help design a 'School fact card' for families to put up at home. The fact card can include important information such as the school phone number, website, term times, etc.
- **School trips:** Inform parents of school trips throughout the academic year and provide information about how they can volunteer to participate.
- **Classroom parents;** Inform parents about 'classroom parents' who help coordinate a variety of classroom events. Remember to list some examples of events and let them know how they can get involved.
- **Talks and demonstrations:** Where possible, invite parents to visit classes and groups of children to give demonstrations or talks on subjects in which they are experts. Examples might include a grandparent who is an expert gardener, another who worked as a coalminer, another who was an evacuee in the Second World War, etc.
- **Parent teacher association:** Encourage parents to join the PTA to help raise money for the school. Remember to state how they can apply.

STEP 6: Volunteering

In this section create opportunities for parents to volunteer through participation in supportive roles, activities and events in school. Opposite are a few examples of what you can include.

VOLUNTEERING:

Decision Making

STEP 7: Decision Making

In this section include opportunities for parents to become involved in educational advocacy and decision making on issues that affect their children's education such as creating and implementing new school policies. To the right are examples of what you can include.

- **Annual parent questionnaire:** Inform parents that an annual questionnaire will be sent out to seek their input and guidance on parent policies and guidance.
- **Parent feedback:** Inform parents that their feedback and consultation on key issues, policies and events in school are important to the school. Remember to inform parents where they can submit their feedback (e.g. school website, suggestion box, questionnaires).
- **Parent surveys and parent forums:** Provide parents with opportunities to give their views by involving them in the creation of parent surveys and parent forums.
- **Pupil-centred approach:** When individual pupils have discipline problems, allow their parents an opportunity to work with staff to help create a plan to deal with the problem.
- **Governing body:** Provide opportunities for parents to become a member of the governing body. Remember to inform them how to apply.

DECISION MAKING:

Community Involvement

- **Coordinated involvement programme:** Inform parents of community to school programmes (e.g. pupil art shows, plays held at community facilities).
- **DVD information:** Provide the opportunity for parents and pupils to produce a DVD about the school to make available to new parents. They could also produce a DVD about how families and community members can get involved with education. Remember to let them know how they can get involved and also how to obtain a copy of the finished DVD.
- **Community projects:** Involve parents and their children in community service projects (e.g. litter picking campaigns, Comic Relief).
- **Family resource or youth services centres:** Inform parents of other useful services available within the community.

STEP 8: Community Involvement

In this section create links with community support groups, agencies and initiatives to help strengthen family and school partnerships. To the left are a few examples of what you can include in this section.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

STEP 9: Monitoring and Review

In this section inform parents how the policy will be reviewed and by whom. To the right is an example of what you can include in this section.

Monitoring and Review

The Head Teacher, who reports to governors about the effectiveness of the policy, monitors this policy on a day-to-day basis. This parent involvement policy is the governors' responsibility and the School Improvement Committee reviews its effectiveness annually. They do so through discussion with the Head Teacher.

Signed: (Head Teacher)

Signed: (Governor)