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# Attendance Policy

**Statement of Purpose**

The school aims to:

* Promote and support excellent school attendance by direct work with schools, pupils & their families to ensure all pupils have the opportunity to maximise their achievements. Excellent attendance is a fundamental element in accomplishing our school mission statement which aims *‘to provide a happy, secure, challenging and hope-filled Catholic environment based on Gospel Values in which the whole needs of the individual can be served as we strive for excellence in all aspects of the curriculum’.*
* Adopt appropriate school procedures to improve attendance and set a target for attendance in line with Welsh Government (WG) and Local Education Authority (LEA) targets.

The importance of regular attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must therefore be a high priority for schools and their Governing Bodies, as well as for parents and the pupils themselves.

By failing to attend regularly, pupils diminish the value of the education provided for them. They may also damage the learning of others because fluctuations in the size of pupil groups may restrict the scope for effective teaching.

The approach to attendance relates to a wide range of other issues, including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees, curricular differentiation, home-school links and the role of the LEA.

Attendance will be coordinated and monitored by the school’s attendance lead, attendance officer, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO).

**Legal Responsibilities**

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and

their associated regulations (which relate to schools and Pupil Referral Units).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that “….. *the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive full-time education*

*suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special education need she/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise … …”*

Section 444 further states that “… *the parent of a child of compulsory school*

*age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence*

*punishable in law … …”*

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

• the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);

• the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;

• the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the

religious body to which the pupil/parents belong;

• the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child’s

home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the

LEA. The law relating to ‘walking distance’ effectively is defined as two

miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils.

***Authorising Absence***

Only a Headteacher can authorise an absence. Parents and the LEA do not have the power to authorise absences, this includes family holidays.

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

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

In the event of holiday leave for a pupil being requested by a parent/carer, from the 1st September 2014 the school will record the sessions as unauthorised absences in line with LEA guidance. Requests made from the 1st January 2015 **may** lead to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) being issued. (See below for more detail on FPNs).

Following an absence parents / carers are requested to provide the school with a written notification explaining the reasons for their child’s absence.

Parents / carers are also advised to provide medical evidence to the school’s attendance officer when their child is absent from school due to illness and medical opinion is sought (e.g. a GP appointment). Failure to do so may result in unauthorised absences being recorded.

(Note: “Unauthorised absence” is absence without approval from the Headteacher of the school and includes all unexplained absences.)

***Lateness***

Persistent lateness can be as damaging to a pupil’s career as persistent absence. Pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but also that of others.

If a pupil arrives late but before registers have closed, a late mark will be recorded; arrival after registers have closed will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded unless a genuine reason is provided.

Pupils persistently arriving after the close of the registration period in more than ten sessions of an academic term may result in a FPN being issued to the parent/carer.

The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved.

The school and the LEA is committed to using the legal process if necessary in order to ensure that parents get their child to school on time. The school will keep accurate records of pupils arriving late and mark the register accordingly in order for the LEA is to effectively address this issue should the need arise.

Where a situation at home makes it difficult for a pupil to arrive on time,

consideration will be given to an appropriate referral to an outside agency or

voluntary service.

**Support from the LEA**

Regular attendance at school is a key to successful learning and progression.

Pupils are expected to reach the minimum target set by the School and the LEA, which is currently 95.1% attendance (2014-15).

The school will seek to recognise those pupils who achieve and exceed the expected level of attendance (e.g. pupils receive attendance certificates during Headteacher assemblies; a Kindle Fire competition (per year group) and/or a cinema/shopping trip for pupils achieving a stated attendance target; gift vouchers for 100% attenders etc...). There are also informal inter-form competitions that add a degree of competiveness between and within form groups and small prizes are encouraged to be given by form tutors.

The school will seek to support those families unable to meet the required target by:

* Daily monitoring of attendance by form tutors (FT) and the attendance officer utilising “first ring back” system. On occasions throughout the year, a daily attendance response team (DART) from the LEA will visit the homes of all absent pupils who have not provided a reason for absence.
* Weekly monitoring of pupils via Head of Key Stage (HoKS) and FT meetings.
* Weekly monitoring of pupils by the school’s attendance lead, attendance officer and AWO.
* If a pupil’s attendance drops below 95% a letter will be sent home to inform parents / carers.
* If a pupil’s attendance drops below 90% then parents / carers will be invited to a meeting at school to discuss any concerns regarding attendance.
* If a KS4 pupil’s attendance is between 90% and 86%, and/or they are identified as vulnerable learners, then a referral may be made to the LEA Reintegration Officer attached the School.
* If the attendance of any pupil falls below 86%, a referral may be made to the LEA Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS). Please note a wellbeing referral can be made at **any** attendance level if there is significant cause for concern. Referrals can also be made to other outside agencies to further support young people and their family if deemed appropriate.
* To comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, the school will operate in accordance with the local authority’s Code of Conduct for FPN’s for regular non-attendance at school.  It remains the discretion of the head teacher to authorise absences in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the local authority. (See detail below).
* Internal truancy will result in closer monitoring of daily attendance via the report system.
* Mentoring: target groups will be selected for mentoring via the usual referral route and/or PASS survey

**Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN)**

These have been implemented as an alternative method to prosecution in bringing about change where a child has relatively low level of unauthorised attendance. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) issue FPNs after considering the information presented to them by the school. They can be requested for the following reasons:

* Where there is a minimum of ten unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in the current term (these do not need to be consecutive);
* Pupils persistently arriving after the close of the registration period i.e. more than ten sessions in the current term;
* Where parents / carers have failed to engage with the school and/or the AWS in attempts to improve attendance but where court sanctions have not been instigated;
* A period of absence from school due to a holiday that was not authorised by school;
* A pupil has regularly come to the attention of the police during school hours and is absent from school without an acceptable reason.

Liable parents will receive a formal warning of the possibility of a penalty being issued and given 15 school days to improve the child’s overall school attendance. Where the school requests a FPN be issued as a response to a period of unauthorised holiday absence the formal warning letter and 15 day improvement period will not apply. Payment (to the LEA) will be £60 if paid within 28 days, £120 if paid within 42 days.

Only one FPN will be issued to a parent in any one academic year but where there may be more than one poorly attending pupil in a family, FPNs may be issued on more than one child in that family.

**Conclusion**

The school expects all children to be as close as possible to 100% attendance. The school is realistic and realises that children become ill and sometimes other exceptional circumstances get in the way of attendance. It is the aim of the school to work with parents and carers to overcome barriers to attendance. However, where this co-operation is not forthcoming, the school will use every measure possible to ensure attendance for the good of the child. Poor attendance is a barrier to a good education. It is the aim of this school to overcome all barriers to education.

**Updated:** December 2014

**Review Date:**  December 2017