



POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

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Promoting Pupils Attendance and Punctuality

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Attendance statistics**
- 3.0 The legal framework**
- 4.0 Registration and de-registration**
- 5.0 Taking family holidays during the school term**
- 6.0 The role of the Educational Welfare Service**
- 7.0 Policy on prosecuting parents**
- 8.0 Specific pupil groups with additional needs**
- 9.0 Developing a whole school policy**
- 10.0 Good Practices**

11.0 Background Documents

Introduction

1.1 This document consists of four aims namely:-

- establishing the LEA's aims and objectives as regards attendance and ensuring that schools in Gwynedd afford this field the highest priority.
- outline the services that are available to provide support for schools, pupils and families to improve upon pupils attendance.
- offer practical support for schools as regards legal aspects.
- disseminate good practice.

1.2 Social inclusion continues to be one of the Assembly Government's principal priorities and the most recent expectations are listed in section 3 of Circular 47/2006 "Inclusion of and Assisting Pupils". The Government places considerable emphasis on reducing absences and although levels of absence in Gwynedd draw favourable comparison with the remaining LEA's in Wales, it is felt that the Authority has no room for complacency.

⌘ This document should be read alongside the guidance contained in Circular 46/2007.

1.3 Inclusion, that contains a response to unsatisfactory patterns of absence, is one of the principal priorities of the LEA's Single Education Plan and targets are set for this field within Priority 4 of the Plan.

1.4 Of almost greater importance is the emphasis placed on regular attendance so as to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate education and gains maximum benefit from the educational opportunities provided.

2.0 Statistics

It is the school's responsibility, and solely that of the school, to authorise and categorize absences. If prior approval has been given or the parent provides a satisfactory explanation, the absence is defined as authorized. Otherwise, it is regarded as being unauthorized absence.

- 2.2 In addition to those pupils who are registered as being absent from school, national studies in Ken Reid's possession, indicate that true absences from schools are much higher i.e. from a sample of 35,000, 30% of Year 10 and 11 pupils admitted playing truant at least once during the previous half-term and 10% of Year 11 pupils admitted playing truant once a week. More often than not, absence of this kind is not discovered or officially recorded - Reid, K., Tackling Truancy in Schools (2000).
- 2.3 Academic Performance - "Every session and every lesson counts". From the perspective of the academic performance of absent pupils, research proves that there is a close correlation between poor attendance and academic results. This is reflected in the report *"The Correlation between Attendance and Attainment In Secondary and Primary Schools"* published by the Government's Department for Education and Skills in 2006.
- 2.4 The Government's Social Inclusion Unit remains concerned about the correlation between pupils absence and crime. It was announced that 5% of all crimes committed in London are committed by children during school hours.
- 2.5 When holding Inspections, ESTYN considers that attendance of below 90% gives cause for concern.
- 2.6 In its support targeting framework, the Education Authority places schools in the following category as regards attendance:

	Unauthorized Absence		Authorized Absences		Maintaining Attendance
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	
An effective school	>0.0% -<0.2%	>0.0% - <0.4%	>0.0% -<6%	>0.0% - <8%	A good prevention system that includes an effective internal system and firm strategy to deal with regular absence.
A school that needs to be set a challenge	>0.2% - <0.4%	>0.4% - <0.8%	>6% - <8%.	>8% -<10%	The prevention system contains some shortcomings and/or the response strategy requires attention.
A school that needs support to focus on specific aspects	>0.4% - <0.6%	>0.9% - <1.2%	>8%- <10%	>10% -<12%	The prevention system at all and/or the response strategy are arbitrary or have shortcomings for a specific reason.
School requires intensive support and assistance	> 0.6%	> 1.2%	> 10%	> 12%	The prevention system and response strategy need urgent attention.

⌘ Evidence indicates that rates of absence in schools in deprived areas can vary considerably. This provides proof that those schools who regard absence as a priority have a major impact on attendance patterns, even in difficult situations.

3.0 The Legal Framework

- 3.1 **Duty of Parents:** Section 7 of 1996 Education Act, Section 4 Circular 47/2006 – “Inclusion and Assistance for Pupils” and Assembly Government Guidance (12/2007) “Parents with Parental Responsibility”.
- 3.2 **Admissions and attendance Registers:** Education Regulations (Pupils Registration) 1995 and Appendix 4.i “Registration Codes and practices” Circular 47/2006 – Inclusion and Assistance for Pupils.
- 3.3 **Provide attendance data for the LEA/Assembly Government:** Rheoliadau Addysg (Gwybodaeth Perfformiad Ysgolion)(Cymru) 2004

- 3.4 **Target Setting (Schools):** Education Regulations (School Performance and Unauthorized Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amended) 2006 and Section 53 2002 Education Act.
- 3.5 **School Attendance Order:** Section 437 1996 Education Act and Section 4 Circular 47/2006.
- 3.6 **Bringing a Prosecution against Parents** Section 444 1996 Education Act and Section 4 Circular 47/2006.
- 3.7 **Order for Bringing Up Children:** Section 8 1998 Crime and Disorder Act.
- 3.8 **Educational Supervision Order:** Section 36 1998 Children's Act and Section 4 Circular 47/2006.
- 3.9 **Police Powers to return truants to school:** Section 16, 1998 Crime and Disorder Act
- 3.10 **Target Setting**
 - National Targets: "The Learning Country" was published in September 2001. As part of this document, a target was set to reduce absences in the Secondary sector in Wales to 8% by 2004 and to 7% by 2007. Unfortunately, this target was not achieved. However, the requirement for local Authorities to set targets continues.

4.0 Registration and De-registration

- 4.1 Detailed guidelines are provided in 1995 (Pupil Registration) Education Regulations and in Appendix 4.i "Registration codes and practices" Circular 47/2006 – Inclusion and Assistance for Pupils.

✂ It is recommended that schools adopt the above guidelines.
- 4.2 By now, "SIMS.net" computerised attendance recording systems are available for every school in the County.
- 4.3 As regards deregistering pupils of compulsory school age, a pupil's name can be delated from the admissions register under the following circumstances:-

- When a school attendance order naming the school has been amended or is no longer in force.
- When the pupil is registered at another school.
- When the pupil no longer attends and the parents have satisfied the LEA that they have made appropriate arrangements.
- When the pupil has moved home and that continuing to attend the particular school would be unreasonable.
- When the pupil who has not returned to school within 10 days has received authorization to be absent to go on a family holiday.
- When a Schools Medical Officer has confirmed that the pupil's health is unlikely to benefit from attendance before reaching the school leaving age.
- Following failure of reasonable efforts to track down the pupil following continued absence of no less than 4 weeks.
- When the pupil has died.
- When the pupil is no longer of compulsory school age and intends not to attend school.
- When the pupil has been permanently excluded and all appeal processes have been exhausted.
- When a pupil who has received nursery education has not transferred to a reception class.

5.0 Taking a family holiday during the school term

5.1 Regulation 8 of the Education Regulations (Registering Pupil) gives Governing Bodies discretion to authorise absence to go on family holidays during the school term.

5.2 **Parents have no entitlement to withdraw their children from school for this purposes and they must seek permission in**

accordance with the arrangements adopted by the Governing Body of the school concerned.

5.3 Only under exceptional circumstances should absence be authorized for a total of more than 10 days in a year.

5.4 Every request should be dealt with on its merits within the following criteria.

- The time of year.
- Length of holidays.
- Purpose of the holidays.
- Impact on educational progression.
- Family circumstances..
- Pupil's overall attendance.

5.5 Unless the parents comply with the Governing Body's arrangements, the absence will be unauthorised.

6.0 The Role of the Educational Welfare Service

6.1 The Council has delegated responsibility to monitor pupils attendance to the Educational Welfare Service.

6.2 Pupil attendance and punctuality is one of the Educational Welfare Service's main priorities.

6.3 In the majority of cases, the Service works closely with families and schools in an effort to improve attendance patterns without recourse to the law.

6.4 The Educational Welfare Officer:

- Encourages parents to visit the school to discuss any concern.
- Provides advice and support as regards several educationally related matters.
- Advises parents on legal duties.
- Tries to bridge between school and home

- Interprets various situations and requirements on behalf of schools and the Authority.

6.5 Usually, a pupils irregular attendance is linked to a broad range of external experiences as well as family or educational problems. In such situations, the Welfare Officer's role is to:

- Identify, in consultation with schools, instances of lack of attendance that requires further attention.
- Assess the circumstances that have led to the child's failure to attend regularly and identify those factors that could have assisted to remedy things.
- Assist schools when interpreting attendance data through analysis and monitoring.
- Interpret the frequency and number of instances of occasional and permanent absences.
- Carefully plan any intervention, ensuring the commitment of the pupil, family and school.
- Implement an agreed plan jointly with the school, the pupil, the family and any other specialist agency.
- Evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the action plan.
- Keep a detailed record of the work done.

6.6 In instances where success has not been achieved through fair means, the Education Welfare service will use its legal powers through prosecuting parents, for failing to ensure their children's regular attendance, before the Magistrates.

6.7 In cases where the parent is not adjudged to be responsible, the Welfare Service can bring the child before the Family Court to request an Educational Supervision Order.

6.8 Referral forms to the Educational Welfare Service can be found on the Schools Service web-site.

7.0 Policy on prosecuting parents

The Education Authority recognizes its responsibility in a case of serious absences and when all other reasonable efforts have failed, to prosecute parents through the Magistrates Courts under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act and take the following action:

7.1 Bringing a prosecution will be considered when a pupil's attendance has fallen to below over a period of two terms.

7.2 Under certain circumstances, prosecution is deemed inappropriate namely:

- Parents mental health.
- That prosecution would worsen a difficult situation that other agencies such as Social Service handle.
- When a Doctor has certified an illness.
- Parents specific circumstances.

⌘ The parent cannot be prosecuted when the school has originally authorised absence.

7.3 The following steps must be taken, prior to prosecuting:

- Implement a broad range of preventative strategies at a school level and through the Educational Welfare Service.
- Hold a Strategy Meeting.
- Assess the parents responsibility for the absence.
- Issue the parents a final warning.
- Consider the appropriateness of applying to a Magistrates Court for an Education Supervision Order.

7.4 As there is evidence to show that prosecution best succeeds amongst parents of junior/primary school pupils, those age-groups should be focused upon with the aim of avoiding difficulties later on. In Year 11, prosecution is only brought under

exceptional circumstances.

- 7.5 The decision whether or not to prosecute is made by the Senior Educational Welfare Officer in consultation with the County Solicitor.
- 7.6 Usually, a member of the Welfare Service attends the Court on behalf of the LEA and will present the case although under certain circumstances, a member of the County's Legal Department will represent the Authority.

☞ See also Appendix A. – Functions When Dealing with Instances of Absence

8.0 Pupils who have Additional Learning Needs

8.1 There is evidence to indicate that certain factors in the lives of children and young people place them at particular risk of absence and becoming disaffected from school which in turn, also places them at greater risk of social exclusion.

8.2 Such a group of pupils should be considered as being at risk and are consequently considered as being children who have additional learning needs. Listed below are the principal groups that the Assembly Government, in Circular 47/2006, consider to be pupils who have Additional Learning Needs.

- Children of families who are in difficult circumstances
- Pupils who have Special Educational Needs
- Disabled pupils
- Pupils from ethnic minority groups including those for whom English is an additional language
- Children who are assylum seekers/refugees
- Gypsies and travellers

- Children of migrant workers
- More gifted and talented pupils
- Children looked after by the LEA
- Pupils who have medical needs
- Young parents and pregnant young girls
- Youth Offenders
- Young carers
- Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-sexual pupils
- Pupils who suffer from a phobia or who refuse to attend school
- Pupils who perform or who work

9.0 Good Practices

- 9.1 The Headteacher and Governing Body should note that pupil attendance is one of the school's main priorities.
- 9.2 A member of the Senior Management Team should be responsible for managing and monitoring attendance related matters.
- 9.3 A Governor should be nominated to be responsible for attendance monitoring.
- 9.4 The school should have a clear, firm and ambitious attendance policy.
- 9.5 A target should be set for every school year individually.

- 9.6 Electronic systems of pupil registration should be used.
- 9.7 School attendance statistics should be regularly monitored and published.
- 9.8 Through graphs and other visual materials, attendance levels should be displayed monthly/termly in a place that is accessible for pupils and staff (classes, foyer).
- 9.9 In discussions with the pupil or his/her parents, the link between absence and reduced attainment should be emphasised.
- 10.00 Consideration should be given to celebrating and rewarding good attendance by individuals or year groups (certificates for 100%) attendance, giving any achievement a high profile. Likewise, a reward should be given for improved attendance pattern during the year, and be celebrated.
- 10.01 The home/parent of every child who is absent should be contacted on the first day of absence.
- 10.02 A system should be established where the parent:
 - contacts the school on the first morning of absence.
 - provides an explanation for the absence at the end of any period of absence.
- 10.03 Efforts should be made to reduce the number of days lost due to family holidays taken during a school term.
- 10.04 A clear system should be established as regards referring matters from the classroom to the management team's attention.
- 10.05 Establish an effective and agreed system of referring matters to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer.

11.0 Background Documents – Further Guidance

- 11.1 "Cynnwys a Chynorthwyo Disgyblion" (47/2006) – Welsh Assembly Government

- 11.2 “Ensuring Regular School Attendance” – Department for Education and Skills
- 11.3 “The Correlation between Attendance and Attainment In Secondary and Primary Schols” – Government Skills Education Department (2006).
- 11.4 “Rhieni a Chyfrifoldeb Rhiant – Canllawiau ar gyfer ysgolion” (12/2007)– Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2007
- 11.5 “Truancy and School Exclusion” – The Social Disaffection Unit
- 11.6 “Adolygiad o’r Gwasanaeth Lles Addysg yng Nghymru” – NFER – 07/2007
- 11.7 “Adolygiad O Feddalwedd Electroneg I Fonitro Presenoldeb Yng Nghymru” – NFER – 01/2007
- 11.8 Gwynedd Single Education Plan
- 11.9 “Cofnodion Addysgol, Adroddiadau Ysgol a’r System Drosglwyddo Gyffredin” (Cylchlythyr 18/2006) – Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru 2006

Adopted: Summer 2012

Chair of Governors: : Dr Einir Young

Head teacher: C Hughes

Reviewed: Spring 2016

Chair of Governors: :Rev John Matthews

Head teacher: Mr Elfed Morgan Morris

Reviewed: Spring 2017

Chair of Governors: :Rev John Matthews

Head teacher: Mr Elfed Morgan Morris

Appendix B.

Functions When Dealing with Cases of Absence

Category of Absence	Level of Absence (%)	Schools Function	Function of the Education Welfare Service
1. Occasional Day/days without an explanation	<10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the parents on the first day• Hold an interview on the pupil's return• Draw the matter to the attention of the Head of Year (Secondary)/ Headteacher Primary• Send official correspondence to the parents	--
2a. Pattern of regular absence without an explanation	10-20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact parents on the first day• Conduct an interview on pupil's return• Draw the matter to the attention of the Head of Year (Secondary) / Head (Primary)	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send official correspondence to the parents • Refer for the Educational Welfare Services attention via the proper form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview the pupil • Contact the home and report via the proper form
2b. A pattern of unexplained regular absence	20-30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the parents on the first day • Conduct an interview on the pupil's return • Draw the matter to the attention of the Head of Year (Secondary) / Headteacher (Primary) • Send official correspondence to the parents • Refer for the Educational Welfare Service's attention via the proper form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the home and report through the proper form • In exceptional cases, the measures outlined below should be followed as regards holding a Strategy Meeting, sending a Final Warning and prosecuting the parents.
3. Persistent/long-term absences	>30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the parents on the first day • Conduct an interview on a pupil's return • Draw the matter to the attention of the Head of Year (Secondary) /Headteacher (Primary) • Send official correspondence to 	

		<p>parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and implement a Pastoral Support Programme • Refer for the attention of the Education Welfare Service via the proper form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview the pupil • Contact the home, report via the proper form • If there is no improvement following two terms of implementation, hold a Strategy meeting inviting the school and relevant Agencies and make recommendations. • Present the Strategy Meeting's recommendations for the attention of the Education Welfare Officer who will consider the appropriateness of prosecuting the parents or apply for an Education Supervision Order. <i>It is emphasised that doing so is the LEA's statutory duty.</i> • Issue a Final Warning to the parents and monitor its impact for a fortnight • Prosecute the parents or apply for an Education Supervision Order.
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