



YSGOL CAPELULO

A WHOLE-SCHOOL POLICY ON ATTENDANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

A Whole School Attendance Policy is one that requires commitment from all staff employed within the School, together with governors, parents, pupils and the Officers of the LA in which the school is located.

A Whole School Approach to attendance relates to a wide range of other school issues including punctuality, behaviour management, anti-bullying schemes, equal opportunities, rewards and incentives, re-integration of absentees, curricular differentiation, school-home relationships and the role of the Education Social Work Service and Social Inclusion Service.

Schools will wish to encourage and promote good attendance in as many ways and for as many pupils as possible, but they will also need to balance this with appropriate measures to address the needs of those children who find it difficult to attend in certain circumstances e.g. medical.

All schools need a framework or model on which to build their individual Whole School Attendance Policy. Conwy County Borough Council offers such a framework in the following pages.

2. A FRAMEWORK FOR A WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Law states that schools, parents and the LA have important roles to play in ensuring the regular attendance of pupils. This framework is provided by the LA in order to share good practice in relation to attendance and to support schools in formulating their own Whole School Attendance Policy. The guidelines will enable schools to incorporate specific elements that reflect the particular needs of their school. The framework for a whole school attendance policy is based on Philosophy, Principles, Procedures, Practice and Evaluation.

It is recommended that elements of the Whole schools attendance Policy should be incorporated into the School Prospectus, Parents' handbook, Staff Handbook and regular briefings or newsletters to Staff and Parents.

Every school policy document may begin with a brief introductory statement, e.g.:

INTRODUCTION

This school policy document on attendance has been produced to explain to all concerned, the rights, responsibilities and rules relating to the attendance of pupils at the School. If children do not arrive in school, they cannot be educated. Good attendance and punctuality leads to the best learning outcomes.

PHILOSOPHY

Mission Statement

- The School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.
- The School aims to ensure the achievement of high levels of attendance and punctuality by all pupils. At Ysgol Capelulo, the school bell rings at 8.55 am for the start of the school day.
- Teachers register pupils at the beginning of the morning, 9.00 am, and afternoon, 1 pm. The official registration period ends at 9.30 am and at 1.30 pm
- With the intention of enabling all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. The School aims to encourage excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.
- The School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, punctuality and good attendance is crucial. As a School, we will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of the School to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. The School will actively promote and encourage 100 per cent attendance for all pupils.

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

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

3. PRINCIPLES

The school will:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive suitable in-service training on registration regulations and educational law.
- Complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.
- Address with parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on **the first day of absence**.
- Display attendance rates around the school and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils
- Consult with pupils on their individual attendance and attendance targets
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence.

- Consult with all members of the school community and the Education Social Work Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers and school governors.
- Send information each term to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- Have in place procedures that allow absentees to catch up on missed work, without disrupting the learning of other class members
- Ensure that attendance policy and practices are monitored regularly and its impact measured using All Wales Core Data/School Effectiveness Framework

4. PROCEDURES

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence the School will:

- Contact the parents by telephone, or if the parents are unavailable send a standard letter requesting information
- After **three days** of unexplained absence, send a second letter if an explanation has still not been received
- Invite parents into school. Assessment of problem and develop action plan e.g. curriculum modification, ALN investigations, bullying issues, referral to other agencies or professionals
- After **ten days** of unexplained absence refer to the school's Education Social Work Service, using the prescribed referral form
- An individual pupil's re-integration plan should be adopted where a pupil is returning to school after any absence of longer than two weeks. In the event of a pupil returning after a long-term absence, then an Individual Re-integration Programme (IRP) will be implemented. The IRP will include all members of the School staff and will be designed to be as supportive of the pupil as possible.

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

5. PRACTICE

The School will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately and the systems for recording pupil presence.
- Ensuring the use of correct registration codes
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers and the operating systems for recording pupil presence
- A named Governor for attendance to be identified
- Regularly analysing attendance to inform reasons for absence, profile of persistent absence, identification of vulnerable groups and links to standards
- That all staff know, understand and consistently apply the policy across school
- To ensure effective tracking is in place to identify any pupil whose attendance begins to slip

- Ensuring that staff know the whereabouts of all pupils every day for safeguarding purposes
- That school robustly implement Children Missing Education procedures i.e. school checklist, referral to ESW Service which can help limit absences on pupil records
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance.
- Liaising closely with the school's Education Social Worker/Education Welfare Officer
- Recording carefully all telephone messages from parents and carers.

EVALUATION

It is important to set realistic targets; these targets will be set in consultation with the LA. The School will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process and also look at effective good practice across the Authority.

When evaluating success the School will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved.
- Punctuality has improved.
- Parental response to absences has improved.
- Re-integration plans have been successful.
- The School has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and the local community.
- The frequency of evaluation (evaluation might usefully be a regular item on the agenda of the Governing body).
- Pupils and parents are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within the School.
- Pupils are aware of their own individual attendance and are given targets
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons or as a theme for any other lessons.
- The school's attendance policy is up to date of good quality and regularly reviewed
- Ensure that attendance is fully integrated into other policy areas (such as Safeguarding)
- That the policy includes school's policy on holidays during term time
- That the school policy/strategy for improving attendance identify the roles of staff and procedures to be followed
- That the school policy and practices are monitored vigorously and its impact measured
- School utilise the School Attendance Self Evaluation Audit Tool to identify areas of improvement within school to assist with targets and to prioritise actions for improvement of Attendance

6. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The school expects pupils to attend school regularly and to arrive on time in a condition fit to learn.
- The School will encourage good attendance and will investigate all absenteeism.

- The School staff will set a good example in matters of attendance and punctuality and will investigate all absenteeism and lateness promptly.
- The School will liaise with parents/carers if their child's attendance/punctuality causes concern.
- 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 in the afternoon session
- Schools need to be aware and adhere to Child Employment & Performance Licensing so that absences are appropriately and legally agreed and documented
- Schools will use the correct registration codes in a consistent manner and train staff accordingly

Pupils

- Pupils will ensure that they attend regularly and on time.
- Pupils will attend all lessons punctually.
- Pupils will be listened to and respected.
- Pupils will have individual records of attendance/punctuality acknowledged by the school.

Parents

- Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends the School regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents are responsible for informing the school by letter, telephone, or a personal visit of the reason for any absence on the first morning of that absence.
- Parents can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's progress.
- Be aware of letters from school which the child brings home
- Parents to attend Parents evening and other events
- To ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time
- Avoid booking holidays during term time, unless it is regarded by the Head Teacher as exceptional circumstances
- Contact the school promptly if they have any concerns that their child is reluctant to attend school

7. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are registered as a pupil.

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, states that:-

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. (S.7.,Pt.I Ch.I).

Section 444 further states that:

"If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence." (S.444, Pt. VI Ch. II).

Also under Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) fixed penalty notices have been

introduced as an alternative to prosecution under Section 444. Parents/carers may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under Section 444 by paying a penalty. Fixed Penalty Notices can be issued in relation to unauthorised absences (see Conwy Education Services Code of Conduct)

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 prescribed walking distance of the child's home to be eligible for free home to school transport. The Local Authority provides free transport where a child of statutory school age, under 11 years of age resides over 2 miles away from the nearest appropriate school, and where a child of statutory school age, over 11 years of age, resides over 3 miles from the nearest appropriate school. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of parents/carers to make arrangements for the safe transportation of their children to and from school (when they do not qualify for school transport) and to and from bus stops and pick up points.
- A limited defence is available to the parents of travelling children.

The act also places a legal obligation on:

- The LA to secure that efficient education is available to meet the needs of its population (S.13, Ptl, Ch.III), and to enforce attendance (S.437, Pt.VI, Ch.II)..
- Schools to register attendance and notify the LA of a child's absence from school. (Inclusion & Pupil Support – Welsh Government Circular 47/2006)

8. ABSENCE

Types of absence

It is vital to emphasise that there are two different types of absence: authorised and unauthorised, and that unauthorised absences may result in the involvement of the Education Social Work Service, and ultimately could lead to the prosecution of the parent in the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996.

Parents may need to be reminded that a letter does not in itself authorise an absence; only the school's acceptance of the explanation offered by the letter authorises the absence.

An example of such reminder could be: "All absences must be explained by a note/phone call from the parent/carer. The school will then decide whether to authorise the absence or not."

It is important to clarify precisely what constitutes authorised or unauthorised absence. The policy should ensure there could be no misunderstanding or ambiguity on this point. A copy of the registration codes would be helpful. Examples could be given such as:

Absence from the School will be authorised by the school if it is for the following reasons:

- Sickness;
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments;
- Days of religious observance;
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement;

Absence from school will not be authorised for the following reasons:

- Shopping;

- Haircuts;
- Missed bus;
- Slept late;
- No uniform;
- Looking after brothers and sisters;
- Minding the house;
- Birthdays.

N.B. all medical/dental appointments should be made outside of school hours as far as possible.

9. AUTHORISED ABSENCE

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

The key point's schools should consider when deciding to authorise absence are:

- It is legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually.
- Schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation.
- Parents should be aware that only the school has that right to agree to a pupil's absence for family holidays in term time; each application for leave should be considered in view of the exceptional circumstances of the family.
- Schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties.
- Minding the house, looking after siblings, shopping or going on a trip will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence.

AN EXPLANATION IS REQUIRED FOR EVERY ABSENCE. IF ONE IS NOT FORTHCOMING THE ABSENCE WILL BE TREATED AS UNAUTHORISED.

- Where absence is authorised, schools should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance.
- Lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance.
- Schools should develop a close working relationship with the Education Social Work Service in order to promote regular school attendance.

10. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE:

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes ALL unexplained absences.

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

SCHOOLS NEED TO EXERCISE CAUTION IN THE AUTHORISATION OF ABSENCE.

If schools are suspicious of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be further investigated and left unauthorised until the matter has been clarified to the satisfaction of the school (please check registration codes). The decision taken by the school to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the ESWS. If the school has authorised a pupil's absence they have in effect given leave, therefore there is no case in law for parents to answer.

PARENTALLY CONDONED ABSENCE

Parentally condoned absence is often more difficult to identify than any other form of pupil absence and is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. If school staff have reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised. Since all absences are to be treated as unauthorised unless and until schools agree on a satisfactory explanation, it is important that schools have procedures, consistently applied to pursue explanations and for amending registers (paper registers or electronic). Such procedures would include a request for medical advice from the Consultant Paediatrician, School Health, The Health Advisor for Medical Absences (some Primary Schools only) regarding non-school attendance.

11. FAMILY HOLIDAY DURING TERM-TIME

Welsh Assembly guidance states:

"In term-time parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils for holidays and authorisation remains at the discretion of the Head Teacher, but this holiday must not exceed 10 days in any academic year". Exceptional circumstances remain at the discretion of the Head (The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010.

There needs to be a discussion between Primary & Secondary Head Teachers around what level of attendance is not acceptable in considering authorising any holiday during term time (within catchments areas and generally so there is a consistency of approach).

Exceptional circumstances remain at the discretion of the Head Teacher as school know their pupils and families, and are better placed to make those judgements. If the Head Teacher's decision is not to agree the request, then the holiday will be an unauthorised absence (G).

A suggested list of exceptional circumstances could be:-

- Those families of serving armed forces personnel
- Parents of a child experiencing a life limiting illness
- Family that has suffered acute trauma
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family
- Any other circumstance that is viewed as exceptional (if an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence)

Local Authority leaflets on taking holidays during term time are very clear regarding these requests, and this information should be relayed to parents regularly.

As good practice however, Conwy Education Services would like every holiday request to be viewed as exceptional, as this would give the parents a clear message that taking their child out of school during term time should be discouraged.

The following list shows how taking time off during term time can impact on attainment and could be given to parents as an example (this would depend on how your school day is structured):-

- 1 day missed = 6 lessons lost
- 1 week missed = 30 lessons lost
- 2 weeks holiday during term time = 60 lessons lost
- 90% = 20 days off school per year/120 lessons
- 85% = 30 days/180 lessons
- 80% = 35 days/210 lessons

Also a reminder to parents in Secondary schools that G.C.S.E. grades as well as other school tests and exam results can be seriously affected by unnecessary absence. The difference between success and failure in a school career depends on attendance.

A clear unambiguous statement about the taking of holidays in term-time needs to be included in the Attendance Policy, School Prospectus, Parents' Handbook, Staff Handbook and regular communications to parents/carers.

In law, parents have to apply for permission in advance, to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday. Such permission is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body. All requests for holiday leave should be in writing, ideally **four** weeks before the holiday, and the application should be made by parent/parents with day-to-day care of the child even if they are not actually going on holiday themselves.

Welsh Government guidelines clearly state that the reference to exceptional circumstances means that the parent must make out a strong case for taking the child away for a holiday during term time. Schools should carefully explore with parents why such exceptional leave of absence is necessary. Where such absences are sanctioned, they should be counted as an **authorised** absence. Where parents fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school in excess of the period agreed or, where parents fail to apply for permission, the extra time taken should be treated as an **unauthorised** absence.

The following factors should also be considered when assessing requests – no one factor should be regarded as conclusive:

- The time of year of proposed trip
- The length and purpose of the holiday
- The duration of the holiday and its impact on continuity of learning
- The circumstances of the family and the wishes of parents
- The overall attendance pattern of the child (% of attendance will also determine whether it is to be considered)

Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that schools will agree to family holidays during term-time. Schools should reinforce this fact on a regular basis with parents. An unambiguous and explicit statement about taking holidays in term-time should be included in all Conwy schools' prospectuses and Handbooks for parents. In the case of ethnic minority parents special care should be taken to ensure that the regulations are fully explained and understood. Interpreters should be used if necessary.

12. EXTENDED OVERSEAS TRIPS

When making judgements about extended absence for pupils from ethnic minority families, schools must take account of Welsh Government guidelines on holidays during term time. It is important that schools show an understanding of the parents' perspective even though they may not be able to give permission to extend absence.

Schools should take account of the following:

- A visit involving family overseas has an entirely different significance from the normal associations with 'holiday' which is the category recognised by the Welsh Government
- Visit may be very important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up
- Parents may feel that the visit outweighs the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school – maintaining family links may involve greater significance and greater pressure in some societies than it does in many western societies
- The reason for parents making a visit may be family illness, bereavement etc.

However, schools should explain to parents that:

- As far as possible, advanced permission must be agreed (**4 weeks**)
- The absence should be planned carefully with the school
- Where possible, extended visits should be made during school holidays particularly July/August
- If visits must be taken during term time, absence should not exceed two weeks (10 school days) unless under exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head Teacher
- Holidays during examination time should be avoided at all costs
- Pupils who miss six weeks or more of school, fall behind in their schoolwork by a full term
- Some pupils never catch up and will under-perform in their examinations
- Their child's name may be removed from the register if he/she has not returned to school within 20 days of the expected return date and no explanation has been given

If extended absence is agreed, schools should consider:

- The potential educational value of the visit i.e. preparing a study pack; asking the pupil to make notes/observations during the holiday in relation to a current or forthcoming class topic; asking the child to gather memorabilia/souvenirs with other pupils
- The amount of school work missed and how to help the pupil catch up on his/return to school

13. LATENESS

A pupil's punctuality for school is a legal requirement (Inclusion & Pupil Support Welsh Government Circular 47/2006) and the parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late after registration closes are guilty of an offence under the Education Act 1996 and could be prosecuted in the Magistrates Court, or issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for the unauthorised absences.

A careful balance needs to be struck between being too punitive and too accepting of a pupil's lateness. Once the reasons for lateness have been established, the school, parents and pupils need to work in partnership to resolve difficulties. Where the home situation makes it difficult for the pupil to arrive on time, the school may need to refer the case to the Education Social Work Service or Social Services.

14. GOOD PRACTICE

Conwy LA recommends that schools consider the following good practice:-

Keeping the Registers

The registers are a legal document and must be kept accurately and neatly. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance, or for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice. It may also contribute data to pupils' end-of-term reports, records of achievement and to leavers' references.

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality are to be tackled. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.

It is expected that Conwy schools will follow Welsh Government guidance and adhere to the common standards and suggested codes when recording absences in the register *Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010*.

Marking the Registers

Paper registers are still being used along with SIMS particularly in some Primary Schools and information must be transferred weekly. Any register (paper register or electronic) is a legal document and attendance certificates are produced in the Magistrates Court as evidence when undertaking a Parental Prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

Manual registration –

- No pupil should be marked present unless actually in the room when the register is called or unless he/she has been given permission to be absent by the registering teacher.
- Spaces must not be left in the register.
- Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open to cater for late arrivals. Welsh Assembly guidelines suggest 30 minutes after the start of each session, (Inclusion & Pupil Support Welsh Government Circular 47/2006). In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, registers may be kept open for longer periods but it is unacceptable to keep them open all morning or afternoon.
- 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.
- Where a pupil misses registration but provides an adequate explanation, s/he should be marked as late but counted as an authorised absence for that session.
- Where a pupil arrives after registration has closed and fails to provide an adequate explanation, absence must be marked as an unauthorised absence.
- Pupils must not mark the register under any circumstances
- Pupils should only be removed from the class register following authorisation from the Head teacher and in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010
- All information that is placed on a paper register, must be transferred weekly on to SIMS
- Registers should be totalled at the end of each week and percentage attendance calculated and monitored
- The decision to authorise an absence should be made as quickly as possible once the information is received from the parents/carers

Computerised Registration

Schools with computerised registration systems may find the list of registration codes at the end of this document useful

Analysis of Attendance Data

All schools hold a great deal of information about attendance which should be used for strategic planning and effective liaison with the ESW Service and can thereby enable schools to manage attendance issues more effectively.

It is suggested that sampling weekly attendance at specific sessions may be helpful in highlighting regular patterns of non-attendance and may reveal for example, an association with certain subjects, teachers or teaching groups. Such analysis can draw attention to the deterioration or improvement in the attendance of individual pupils. The analysis can help target intervention more selectively and help establish the causes of absence (**Please also see section on Evaluation**).

15. THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

An Attendance Policy should cover the role of the Education Social Work Service and the named Education Social Worker/Education Welfare Officer. Relevant elements of this information should also be included in the School Prospectus, Staff Handbook, Parents' handbook and any attendance related communication to parents/carers.

The Conwy Education Social Work Service (ESWS) forms part of the Authority's support services to schools to help schools to secure pupils' good attendance. The Welsh Government stated:

"...it is of crucial importance to establish an effective working relationship between schools and the ESWS."

As part of this role the ESWS will:-

- Identify areas of good practice relating to improving attendance and disseminate to schools*
- Analyse attendance data both nationally and locally to identify areas of improvement*
- Monitor the correct use of registration codes*
- Support schools in improving outcomes for pupils*

Education Social Workers/Education Welfare Officers (ESW/EWO) work closely with schools and families to resolve attendance issues. An ESW/EWO is based in each of the Conwy Secondary schools responding to needs as they arise in that school and their feeder primaries.

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

The ESW/EWO has a dual role to play as a provider of a service to the school and as a mediator between home and school. However, attendance is the responsibility of the whole school and the pupils' parents. Schools should, therefore consider the most effective ways of giving all staff access to the ESW/EWO and an

understanding of the ESW/EWO role and responsibilities. Work with the ESW/EWO should not be regarded as the exclusive domain of pastoral staff.

In the event of a mainstream Secondary School employing their own Education Social Worker/Education Welfare Officer, the responsibility for attendance will be undertaken by their own member of staff, until any legal action is requested. It remains the responsibility and statutory role of the Local Authority to determine whether the parents/carers have failed in their duty to ensure regular attendance under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and therefore prosecuted under this Act, or issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice.

16. REFERRING A CASE TO THE EDUCATION SOCIAL WORK SERVICE

The ESW/EWO time is inevitably limited. Schools should therefore, have a clear policy on how and when a referral to the ESWS is made and to be sure that all staff understand the procedures. The standard ESWS referral should always be used to provide as much detailed information as possible.

The school's own procedures for dealing with absence should have been exhausted before a referral is made to the ESWS. Welsh Government Circular 47/2006 Inclusion & Pupil Support points out that prior to a referral to ESWS schools should make an effort to address the non-attendance through:

- Action by the class tutor, as part of their day-to-day duties;
- Involvement of others within the school e.g. Head of Year, Head teacher or Deputy Head;
- Contact with the parents via telephone
- Inviting parents into school for a meeting

In general, formal referrals should take place if:-

- A pupil fails to attend schools continuously for ten school days;

“All schools, including independent schools, must inform the LA at agreed intervals of the name and address of any registered pupil who fails to attend the school regularly or has been absent continuously for ten or more school days, schools should provide the reason for the absence, if known...”

- A pattern of irregular attendance is either continuing or worsening (sporadic days or blocks of absence);
- Parents do not accept their responsibilities for ensuring the child attend school and are refusing to discuss ways of improving attendance with the school;
- Condoned unjustified absence is increasingly a problem;
- Or the parents ask for excessive authorised absence.

17. PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

Every Conwy school should have effective and recognised procedures for identifying and following up absences and for weekly formalised liaison with their Education Social Worker/Education Welfare Officer.

The Role of School Staff

In Primary Schools it is recommended that the Head teacher take responsibility for following up unexplained absences using the standard procedures outlined. The Head teacher and the Class Teacher will liaise weekly to enable early identification and intervention of attendance problems.

In Secondary schools the Head of Year is usually responsible for following up unexplained absences using the standard procedures previously outlined. The Year

head and the Form Tutor will liaise weekly to check registers to enable early identification and intervention of poor attendees.

The year Head will have weekly meetings with the ESW/EWO to agree the way the school and the LA/ESW will work with and support the pupil whose attendance is poor.

- If a pupil returns from absence without a letter of explanation a letter requesting information should be sent home.
- All contact with parents/carers should be recorded and 'sick-notes' from parents/carers and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialled by the Form Tutor/Head of year. These notes should be placed in an absence envelope at the back of the register or similar, or on the pupil's file
- Where explanations for absence are unsatisfactory, or where absence persists, the person responsible for attendance should invite the parent(s) to school to discuss any difficulties which may prevent the pupil from attending school. If parents do not attend or send their apologies, the ESW/EWO will follow their own processes outlined above.
- Where there are problems of lateness, the person responsible for attendance should contact the parent(s) either by telephone or by the standard letter

18. ADDITIONAL IDEAS FOR INCLUSION IN THE POLICY DOCUMENT

Schools may wish to incorporate the following ideas in their policy document or Appendices, or alternatively this would be valuable guidance for inclusion in the Staff Handbook.

19. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

- The school's commitment to achieving high levels of attendance should be explicit and clear to pupils, staff and parents.
- Pupils are to be constantly reminded of the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of correct registration codes for late arrivals and these codes are consistently utilised throughout the school
- The School should try to ensure that pupils classroom experience is positive and enriching which will encourage them to take responsibility for and show commitment to their own learning
- Ensure that all school staff are trained on the appropriate use of registration codes – this training should be undertaken regularly
- Some pupils fail to attend because they are unable to keep up with their peers in class and become discouraged. As part of its policy on additional learning needs schools should ensure that children's needs are identified and that action is taken to meet those standards.
- The curriculum will be monitored and developed flexibly to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Look at alternative curriculum for pupils who are hard to engage
- Attendance statistics and individual lesson attendance statistics will be collected and used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices and identify patterns of absence and problem areas.
- The Form Tutor/Head of Year should promptly investigate all issues that may lead to pupil absence.

- Plan an annual attendance Week to focus on attendance issues – with awards, activities, and parental involvement.
- Identify pupils at risk of poor attendance before they transfer to another class, group or school and devise ways of supporting them.
- Include attendance targets in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers.
- Discuss individual attendance targets with all pupils
- Parents will be kept regularly and fully informed of all concerns around attendance and punctuality.
- Pupils whose attendance falls beneath 90% will be set targets for improvement. The Form Tutor/Head of Year will regularly review these targets.
- The School will write to parents of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern at the end of every half-term.
- Parents, pupils and staff need to be regularly reminded of the types of absence that are recognised as authorised and unauthorised displayed in the school foyer.
- Regular, structured meetings will be held with the school's ESW/EWO in order to identify and support those pupils whose attendance/punctuality is causing concern.
- Primary & Secondary Schools set out clear guidelines regarding authorising holidays during term time (see section on holidays during term time above)
- Engage School Council/pupils views regarding the importance of regular attendance and how this can be improved
- Strengthen links with outside agencies that assist in supporting families
- Comply with pupil registration regulations with families that withdraw pupils to educate at home, and when removing pupils from the school roll
- Evaluate strategies to improve attendance in a robust manner and evaluate their effectiveness
- Utilising School Attendance Panels
- Ensure all schools staff are alert to and trained on identifying issues around bullying, safeguarding and the needs of vulnerable groups (i.e. Young Carers, Looked after Children, Gypsy Travellers, Safeguarding issues including those pupils on the Child Protection Register, or Children in Need of Support)
- Utilising Education Services School Attendance Self Evaluation Audit Tool that looks at areas such as :-

- Strategic Management
- The Attendance Policy
- Managing Attendance
- Collection and Analysis of Data
- Communication

20. BULLYING/ANTIBULLYING STRATEGIES

- Many pupils do not attend because they are afraid of bullying or behaviour which may frighten or alarm them. Schools should consider this possibility when investigating individual cases of poor attendance and should promptly address the problem by adopting procedures and practices in a whole-school approach to bullying.
- Schools may wish to seek advice and practical strategies from the Education Social Work Service or the Social Inclusion Service to set up anti-bullying programmes,

'buddying' schemes, peer counselling etc. Conwy's Bullying Policy needs to be clearly defined within this Policy

REWARDS/RECOGNITION FOR GOOD/IMPROVED ATTENDANCE

- Sending letters to parents/carers of new pupils after the first possible 100 attendances, with special praise both for those with 100% attendance and for those with no avoidable absences
- Recording attendance on reports sent home with positive comments for effort.
- Entering improvements on the school record of a poor attendee
- Sending children to senior members of staff for commendation for efforts made towards improvement as well as for full attendance.
- Parents of pupils whose attendance is a cause for congratulating will be written to by the Head Teacher at the end of every half-term.
- The school will award termly certificates to all pupils whose attendance/punctuality is either excellent or much improved.
- Good attendance and punctuality will be promoted and rewarded through termly merit awards made by the Head teacher.
- Photographs of pupils who achieve high levels of attendance are displayed in the school foyer.
- Award vouchers for exchange in local outlets (sports' goods, and stationary etc.) to reward excellent or improved attendance.
- Identify pupils at risk of poor attendance before they transfer to another class, group or school and devise ways of supporting them.
- Include attendance targets in the induction programme for all new staff and in particular for newly qualified teachers.
- Parents will be kept regularly and fully informed of all concerns around attendance and punctuality.
- Parents, pupils and staff need to be regularly reminded of the types of absence that are recognised as authorised and unauthorised
- Pupils whose attendance falls beneath 90% will be set targets for improvement. These targets will be regularly reviewed by the Form Tutor/Head of Year.
- Regular, structured meetings will be held with the school's ESW/EWO in order to identify and support those pupils whose attendance/punctuality is causing concern.
- Parents of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be written to by the Head Teacher at the end of every half-term.

21. PRIMARY/SECONDARY TRANSFER

- Visits to feeder primary schools will be made in order to secure the fullest support for all pupils during secondary transfer.
- Establish a clearly defined and regularly reviewed strategy to facilitate secondary transfer.
- Systems to monitor and review the progress of all Year 7 pupils.
- Effective liaison with the ESW/EWO attached to feeder primary schools.
- Identify at-risk pupils in Year 6 and notify Head of Year 7 prior to transfer.
- Purposeful liaison between Year 6 and 7 teachers.
- Try to meet all parents of Year 7 pupils.
- Involve the whole school in taking responsibility for assisting new pupils

- Involve parents of Year 6 and 7 from the very beginning.
- Ask last year's Year 7 pupils what, if anything, they found difficult.
- 'Pair' vulnerable pupils with responsible pupils from upper years.
- Initiate a Year 7 mentor scheme.

22. RE-INTEGRATION AFTER ABSENCE

- The pupil needs to feel welcome and supported.
- Support needs to be readily available
- A named key person with whom the pupil is comfortable should be appointed to support the pupil.
- Provide a social mentor
- Reasons for absence should be discussed, and where possible changes made to prevent further difficulties.
- Negotiate a pupil agreement/contract containing aims and targets and review dates.
- An individual timetable should be negotiated and produced, and reviewed.
- Establish an initial part-time timetable
- Sensitively re-integrate pupils who have been absent through a structured and individually tailored programme.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the pupils who are re-integrating after an absence.
- Ensure ALL staff are aware of the procedures and practices for sensitively re-integrating pupils back into school.

Many parents/carers are unaware of their legal obligations and responsibilities regarding their child's attendance at school, and the procedures they should follow if their child is absent from school. It is therefore important that schools advise parents/carers of their responsibilities when the child joins the school, and maintain this contact with regular reminders about attendance throughout their school career.

Policy revised- January 2015

Reviewed by the whole Governing Body July 2017

Reviewed by the Wellbeing Sub committee 2021