



WELSHPOOL HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

DATE REVIEWED: **March 2023**

DATE FOR REVIEW: **March 2025**

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SIGNED _____
Chair of Governing Body

27/04/2023
DATE _____

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J.E. Jones', written over a horizontal line.

SIGNED _____

27/04/2023
DATE _____

Headteacher

DESIGNATED STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

NAME: MR JAMIE LOXAM

CONTACT NUMBER: 01938 552014

DEPUTY STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE AT THE SCHOOL

NAME: MISS JULIE HAYCOCK

CONTACT NUMBER: 01938 552014

NOMINATED MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING BODY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE

NAME: MRS SUZI HARKNESS [Link Governor]

Contacts within the Local Authority

The named officer within Powys LA is Mr Michael Gedrim

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RATIONALE

- The school bases its attendance policy on the guidelines as set out by the PCC.
- Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents, the school shares with them, and the local authority (LA), responsibility for encouraging good attendance and improving poor attendance.

- The school is required by law to maintain specific records and to produce specified information on the attendance of pupils.
- Statutory obligation apart, the school is committed to improvements in attendance standards as a direct stimulus to raising pupil achievement.
- Poor attendance is destructive of educational achievement, undermines the well-being of each pupil and demoralises staff.
- The LA has a statutory duty to ensure that a pupil for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education and, if a registered pupil at school, this means attending school regularly and on time.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote good attendance as this is vital to educational achievement.
- To convey clearly to parents and pupils that:
 - regular attendance is essential;
 - unauthorised absence and persistent lateness is not acceptable;
 - only the Headteacher in the context of the law can approve absence;
 - parental condoned, unjustifiable absence will be investigated and will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- To keep records of attendance which:
 - clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence by pupils;
 - provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of school attendance rates through centrally held statistics.
- To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:
 - responding rapidly to pupil absence;
 - recognising pupils who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance records.
- To be sensitive to situations where regular attendance patterns are disrupted by external factors such as family bereavement.

STATUTORY 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 needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise..."

Section 444 further states "...the parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law..."

Compulsory school age means that children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday and are of compulsory school age until after the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.

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 an unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/ parent belongs;
- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the pupil's home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the LA. The law relating to walking distance effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Distance will be measured by nearest available walking route.

Absence from the centres will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- sickness of a severity meaning the pupil cannot attend school;
- unavoidable medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exceptional family circumstances.

Absence from school will not be authorised for:

- shopping;
- haircuts;
- missed bus;
- overslept;
- no uniform;
- looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents;
- minding the house;
- birthdays;
- holidays / day trips taken in term time.

Parents are asked to make all medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

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 accuracy of the register is important to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

The Welsh Government (WG) Education (Penalty Notice)(Wales) Regulations 2013 states that Local Authorities (LAs) are required by law to adhere to the Education Act 1996 section 444 to include Penalty Charge Notices as one of the interventions to promote better school attendance.

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 provide that certain cases of unauthorised absence can be dealt with by way of a Penalty Charge Notice. A Penalty Charge Notice is a financial penalty of up to £120 and may be issued to a parent / carer as a result of a pupil's regular non-attendance at school / education provision.

PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

Clear systems and procedures will govern response to all pupil absence. The school will follow the 'Procedures for Non Attendance' flowchart as agreed by PCC.

The school adheres to the descriptors received from PCC.

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 95-100% attendance | Best chance of success | Your child is taking full advantage of every learning opportunity. |
| 90-95% attendance | At least 2 weeks of learning missed | Satisfactory. Your child may have to spend time catching up with work. |
| 85-90% attendance | At least 4 weeks of learning missed | Your child may be at risk of underachieving and may need extra support from you to catch up with work. |
| 80-85% attendance | At least 5 ½ weeks of learning missed | Your child's poor attendance has a significant impact on learning. |
| Below 80% attendance | At least 7½ weeks of learning missed | Your child is missing out on a broad and balanced education. You are at risk of prosecution. |

The school encourages good attendance and punctuality by;

- creating a caring and nurturing environment whereby pupils' feel safe and appreciated as young adults;
- ensuring that attendance and punctuality are recognised within the whole school reward system, e.g. lunch passes, attendance levels considered before a pupil is eligible for merit trips and trips abroad;
- developing positive relationships with parents / carers and external agencies working with the family / pupil;
- monitoring and evaluating the early intervention strategies adopted by the school;
- working closely with multi agency colleagues and the Education Inclusion Service to improve attendance and punctuality;
- monitoring attendance data and trends and reporting this information to the Governing Body.

Specific actions

- The school will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and pupils through the initial transition meeting prior to admission.
- The school will also communicate the importance of attendance to parents and pupils through assemblies, the school prospectus, newsletters and the school website.
- If no contact is received by the parent / carer of an absent pupil on the first morning of the absence, a telephone call is made by the school's administration staff to investigate the reason for the absence. If the school is not able to contact the family then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (N no reason yet provided for absence).
- Details of the absence are recorded, if later received, and discussed with the Headteacher and a decision will be made with regards to authorisation as soon as possible. The Headteacher may ask the Education Welfare Service for advice with regards to this but the decision to authorise any absence remains with the school.
- If the pupil is registered as a Child in Need or on the Child Protection Plan and absent from school without reason, then the school should contact Social Services as soon as possible.
- If an absence remains unexplained for 3 consecutive days then arrangements should be made for the Education Welfare Officer to visit the home.

- When a pupil returns to school from an absence, but no explanation is offered, contact will be made with the parents.
- A letter will also be sent out if a pupil is persistently late to school.
- Ultimately, if an attendance matter cannot be resolved by the school and the appropriate steps have been followed (as outlined in the 'Procedures for Non Attendance' document), then a referral will be made to the LA Service for further investigation.
- A request to the Local Authority for a Penalty Charge Notice can be made by the school, police or from within the local authority itself in relation to poor attendance at school.

The school will also:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law relating to school attendance;
- complete school registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session – the register is open for 30 minutes after the start of the morning and afternoon session;
- stress to parents and carers the importance of contacting the school as early as possible on the first and subsequent day of absence;
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence;
- when a pupil returns to school from an absence, but no explanation is offered contact will be made with the parent;
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance by the Governing Body;
- work towards ensuring all pupils are supported and valued and so want to attend school.

The Designated Members of Staff

Attendance is the responsibility of all staff. There is, however, a designated member of staff for attendance matters and all staff are able to discuss individual pupil attendance with this person. The Designated Member of Staff for Attendance, Mrs Zoe Alderson:

- monitors the school's registers;
- liaises with teaching staff, in particular Heads of Year;
- meets with the EWO on a regular pre-arranged basis;
- refers to other agencies if appropriate;
- refers to the school nurse if there are doubts about the validity of an illness;

- oversees the use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance and requiring parental response,
- arranges for an attendance meeting in the case of repeated, unexplained absences (school will consider inviting the named governor for attendance to such a meeting);
- ensures that the LA Officer's role is known and understood in school.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered, regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn (parents are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered).

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should:

- a) take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- b) attend parents' evenings and other school events, if possible;
- c) ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- d) be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- e) ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- f) ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;
- g) always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence;
- h) confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- i) avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- j) talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.

PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school and alternative provisions is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. In law, an offence occurs if a parent / carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school / alternative provision and that absence is not authorised by the school.

The LA is committed to the continual raising of achievement of all their pupils. There is an expectation that all its pupils, regardless of their individual circumstances or needs, are able to secure their entitlement to high quality teaching and learning. Regular attendance is therefore critical if all our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Regular attendance and punctuality are

essential to allow children to achieve their full potential during term time at school. Regular attendance also ensures that children are safe and lessens the opportunities to become involved in truancing and associated anti-social activities.

Parents / carers and pupils are supported at a school / alternative education provision level to overcome barriers to regular attendance and through a wide range of assessment and intervention strategies. Sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental cooperation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem. This additional sanction is a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that its use will secure an improvement.

The key criteria for issuing Penalty Charge Notices are as follows:

- when a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions (five school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences during the current term and this brings the overall pupil's attendance to below 90% in the school year (these absences do not have to be consecutive);
- unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays in term-time if the absences take the overall pupil's attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive);
- persistent late arrival at school i.e. after the register has closed ('U' code as in the Codes Guidance Document 2010). Persistent for the purpose of this document means at least 10 sessions of late arrival within a term; these do not need to be consecutive but should bring the overall pupil's attendance to under 90% in the school year to date;
- it should be noted that Penalty Charge Notices will only be issued by post and never as an instant action, e.g. during a Truancy Sweep.

Penalty Notices – for Inclusion in all school attendance policies from academic year 2022/23

It is only schools who can decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. The code 'H' is for where a school has agreed to the absence for a child within term time due to a holiday, a 'G' code for when a school decides they are not prepared to authorise a holiday in term time or it is in excess of the agreed time away from school, and 'F' for an agreed Extended family holiday. The All Wales Attendance Framework (2011) with regard to exceptional circumstances where a period of absence is requested over two weeks in a year that each request should be considered individually and the criteria for consideration are listed on p.74.

Advice from the Local Authority is to continue to advise schools not to authorise absences during term time due to holidays, but that each application will be judged on an individual basis.

Penalty Charge Notices are an early intervention tool and contribute towards the drive of improving school attendance and related outcomes for our children and young people in terms of attainment.

For further information on Penalty Charge Notices please refer to the Code of Conduct which can be found on:

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/schools-students/school-attendance-welfare/>

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/cy/ysgolion-a-myfyrwyr/school-attendance-welfare/>

When making judgements about extended absence for pupils from minority ethnic families, schools should ensure that full account has been taken, not only of the Regulations and Welsh Assembly Government guidance, but also of the situation of minority ethnic families in general and the particular circumstances relating to each individual case. It is important that schools show an understanding of the parents' perspective even though the school may not be able to comply with a request for absence.

Schools should ensure that all parents are aware of the school's policy on absence.

In the case of minority ethnic parents, special care should be taken to ensure that the Regulations are fully explained and understood. Interpreters should be used if necessary or, where a number of parents are concerned, the school may wish to consider organising a special meeting for these parents.

Schools should take account of the following:

- a visit involving a family overseas has an entirely different significance from the normal associations with 'holiday' which is the category recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- visits may be very important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the planned 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 the UK; and
- the reasons for parents making a visit may be similar to those for indigenous parents, e.g. family illness, bereavement, etc.

However, schools should explain to parents that:

- advance permission is required and the absence should be planned carefully with the school;

- if holiday leave must be taken during term time, the Headteacher can only authorise absence up to ten school days, any additional time in excess of this would be unauthorised;
- their child's name may be removed from the register if he or she has not returned to school within ten school days of the expected date of return.

REGISTRATION

Keeping the registers

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It will also be used for end of term reports, records of achievement and reference requests, and information for other schools, LAs and external agencies.

- No pupil should be marked present unless actually in attendance at school or other agreed educational activity.
- The register should not have missing marks.
- When a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupils should be marked as late but counted as present for the session.
- When a pupil misses registration, she / he should be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless a medical letter / phone call by parent is received and deemed to be genuine.
- Pupils should not have access to the register.
- The Headteacher is the only person who can authorise that a pupil be removed from the register – this can only be done with the agreement of the LA.
- In addition to twice daily registration in form groups, a class register is taken for every lesson throughout the day. These are referred to / checked by the Head of Year to identify possible truancy and any pupil found to have missed a lesson.

Lateness

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parent of a pupil who is persistently late is guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if persistent late arrival is not resolved.

Holidays

Headteachers do have the discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday or trips. However, the ERW Consortium is strongly advising that any holidays or day trips in term time should be unauthorised, and that there should be no exceptions to this policy. The school adheres to this and family holidays during term time will not be authorised.

Registration Codes

| | |
|---|--|
| / | Present (AM) |
| \ | Present (PM) |
| B | Off Site Education |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances |
| D | Dual Registered i.e Present at another school or PRU |
| E | Excluded (No alternative provision made) |
| G | Family holiday (Not agreed) |
| H | Unauthorised Holiday |
| I | Illness |
| J | Interview |
| L | Late (Before the registers closed) |
| M | Medical / Dental Appointment |
| N | No reason yet provided for absence |
| O | Unauthorised Absence (Not covered by other code) |
| P | Approved Sporting Activity |
| R | Religious Observance |
| S | Study Leave |
| T | Traveller Absence |
| U | Late (after registers closed) |
| V | Educational Visit or Trip |
| W | Work experience |
| Y | Partial or Enforced closure |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence |

| | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| # | School closed to all pupils |
| Z | Pupils not on roll yet |

TARGET SETTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

There is a statutory requirement to set attendance targets yearly, which have to be agreed by the school governors. These targets are set in consultation with ERW. The targets should be both realistic and sufficiently challenging in order to raise school attendance in general.

Schools need to be aware of the interventions that have been successful as part of their evaluation process. Evaluation might usefully be an annual item on the agenda of the governing body, with regular updates in the school governors' meetings. When evaluating procedures, the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absences has improved
- Reintegration plans have been successful
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance, with the school, the governing body, parents and the local community

This policy will be reviewed every two years.