SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Adopted by the Governing Body

Rationale

Your child's success at our school is the most important part of their enjoyment and belief in their potential with us. To ensure your child has the best opportunity to benefit from the excellent teaching and learning at school, we need you as their parent/carer and wider family, to work with us. We need you at our parents' evenings to find out how your child is doing at school – what their strengths are, and where we (you, and us as a school) need to support them.

Pupils who do not attend regularly may fall behind in their learning leading to feelings of frustration and unhappiness. We seek to provide environments in which all young people can flourish as a member of a happy, caring and safe community. We believe that promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school and wider community.

All children should be at school, on time, every day that it is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Schools have a legal duty to publish attendance figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty and responsibility to ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis. We know that all children are sometimes reluctant to attend school.

Any problems, which arise with attendance, are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, please do not cover up this absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. Come and talk to us, email us or ask for a meeting to see if there is an issue in school we can support with resolving, or signposting you for support – for example, with Teams Around the Family (TAF).

ESTYN states:

For secondary schools:
"There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Research shows that missing 17 days of school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a GCSE grade across all subjects. In the workplace unauthorised absences would not be accepted and we need to help our children and young people to prepare for the workplace"

ALL Schools
"The statistical link between attendance and attainment is strong. In Wales in 2014, over 92% of pupils with NO absence attained the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2. For pupils with attendance between 80 – 90%, this figure drops notably to 77% of pupils. Based on the statutory number of 190 school days per year, a pupil with 90% attendance will miss 19 days of schooling each year.

Primary Schools
Between entering primary school in the reception class to the end of primary education in Year 6, a pupil with an average attendance of 90% will miss 133 full days of school. This is well over half a year of learning."

By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves at least over 95% attendance, to achieve THEIR full potential.

Commitments (rights, responsibilities and roles)

- Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi VA's Attendance Policy has its basis in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe that all young people have the right to education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.

- All schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take attendance registers twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

- Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education.

It is expected that this policy will be interpreted considering any subsequent formal guidance from Welsh Government. Should any subsequent guidance significantly change the operation of any aspect of this policy the Headteacher acting in conjunction with the Chair of Governors shall publish as soon as is practicable on the school website any temporary arrangements pending the policy being reviewed by the Governing Body. It is expected that only those sections affected by any subsequent guidance will require temporary arrangements and that the remainder of the policy shall remain in force until formal review.

Should the Local Authority change its Code of Practice relating to penalty notices the same procedure applies as in the case of subsequent Welsh Government Guidance affecting any part of this policy. School staff and parents can view the current Code of Conduct arrangements on the Pembrokeshire County Council website.

Guidance on Penalty Notices for Non Regular Attendance at School 116/2013 issued September 2013 – Additional information can be found in the appendix of this policy.
Penalty notices for regular non-attendance at school: guidance | GOV.WALES

1 Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance and Religious Observance 2016

School attendance and religious festivals guidance 2023 (gov.wales)

The above list is non exhaustive.

1. Registration

1.1 To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils' attendance marks are registered electronically via the Capita School Information Management System (SIMS).

1.2 Pupils are registered at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

1.3 Teachers are required to record present or absent against each pupil's name. Absence marks must be followed up with the appropriate code being added once the reason for absence has been ascertained (see below).

1.4 The individual schools, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance Codes 2010:

Code	• **Meaning**	**Statistical category**
/\	• Present at registration	Present
L	• Late but arrived before the register closed	Present
B	• Educated off-site (not dual registration)	Approved educational activity
B1	• Pupil in receipt of online learning provided by a local authority	Approved educational activity
B2	• Pupil in receipt of online learning provided by the school	Approved educational activity
J	• Interview	Approved educational activity
P1	• Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
P2	• Approved performance	Approved educational activity

Code	• Meaning	Statistical category
V	• Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity
W	• Work experience (not work based training)	Approved educational activity
C1	• Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code or description)	Authorised absence
C2	• Absence due to a paid performance	Authorised absence
C3	• Pupil who is flexi-schooled	Authorised absence
C4	• Pupil who is on a part-time timetable	Authorised absence
F	• Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised absence
H	• Agreed family holiday	Authorised absence
I1	• Physical illness	Authorised absence
I2	• Non-physical illness	Authorised absence
M	• Medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
S	• Study leave	Authorised absence
E	• Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
R	• Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
T	• Traveller absence	Authorised absence

Code	• Meaning	Statistical category
N	• No reason for the absence provided yet	Unauthorised absence
O	• Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
G	• Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
U	• Late and arrived after the register closed	Unauthorised absence
D1	• Dual registered (pupil attending other educational setting)	Not required to attend
X	• Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not required to attend
Y1	• Partial closure	Not required to attend
Y2	• Whole-school closure	Not required to attend
Z	• Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend
#	• School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend

2. Absence, lateness and medical appointments

2.1 Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone at the beginning of the first day of their child's absence. Individual schools monitor telephone calls each morning.

2.2 Should a pupil be absent from school without explanation, the school will contact home / parent / carer / contacts (telephone, text, etc.) where a request

will be sent to parents asking them to make contact with the school as a safeguarding precaution, to allow parents to indicate the reason for absence, and (where applicable) to provide an indication of when their child will be able to return to school. Unless an indication in terms of length of time, is given, parents are expected to inform the school at the beginning of each subsequent day of absence unless other arrangements have been mutually agreed.

2.3 Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking the reason for absence.

2.4 If a child arrives late to school, pupils / parents must either ensure that they sign in to, stating a reason for being late, or make contact with the school. If pupils are required to leave school within the day, prior notice must be given to the school (agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher). Lateness, especially if persistent should be treated in the same way as irregular attendance. Parents can be prosecuted if the issue of persistent lateness is not resolved. Lateness can be as damaging to a pupil's educational career as persistent absence can impact upon learning.

2.6 Whenever possible medical appointments should be booked outside of the school day. If appointments are not possible outside of the school day, then proof of the appointment may be required and pupils should return to school afterwards unless there is a valid medical reason given. Where an absence is authorised, the school will use the appropriate code to record the absence. If a pupil is feeling unwell during the school day, then they will be sent to the school medical area where they will be treated appropriately. At this point, a decision will be made as to whether the pupil should be sent home or not.

3. Authorisation of absence (including holidays)

3.1 Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school. All schools will exercise caution in the authorisation of absence and parents must seek to provide the school with a full picture of the reasons and in some circumstances documentary evidence relating to the reason for the request. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 states that all absences are to be treated as unauthorised until schools have agreed that a satisfactory explanation has been given which should normally be within one day. If a reason is accepted, it needs to be recorded on the SIMS system using the correct code.

3.2 The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. **Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance.** The headteacher will only authorise family holidays at their discretion where parents are able to demonstrate that in the individual circumstances warrant it being authorised.

The fundamental principle underlying this policy is that schools are open for 190 days a year. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time

together, including weekends and school holidays. Parents are to be actively encouraged to take time off and book holidays outside of term time as it is only with parental cooperation will it be possible to achieve and maintain a high level of attendance and attainment.

3.3 When assessing requests for a holiday, the Headteacher will consider:

- The age of the child
- The time of year of the proposed trip;
- The length and purpose of the time off;
- Any impact on continuity of learning;
- Overall attendance pattern;
- The stage of education
- The child's progress
- Any guidance issued by Welsh Government

Balanced with

- The circumstances of the family
- The wishes and views of the parents; and
- The purpose of the holiday

The above list is not exhaustive and the Headteacher is entitled to consider other factors which they feel to be relevant to the exercise of their discretion.

3.4 Should the holiday take the total absence due to holidays for the year to being over 10 days then only in **exceptional circumstances** should this holiday be granted. The test of **exceptional circumstances** applies only to holidays which accumulate over the course of the year to more than 10 days. Holidays which accumulate to 10 days or less throughout the year need to be considered in accordance with paragraph 3.3 above.

3.6 Parents should not expect, and head teachers should not assume that because a term time absence is agreed one year that it will be authorised the next. As children become older and progress through the stages of education there will inevitably be different circumstances applicable as they will be learning new topics and studying for a different key stage. Likewise, it should also not be assumed that if there is an extended family / friends holiday where the children attend different schools that if the term time absence is agreed in one school that the other school will also agree the absence. The exercise of discretion lies solely with the individual Headteacher of any particular school and the circumstances and attendance records of individual children will inevitably differ.

3.7 Headteachers also have the discretion to authorise only part of a term time absence. If the request is for a 10-day term time absence the head teacher can authorise 5 days and inform the parent that any days taken beyond the 5 days will be unauthorised.

3.8 For non-holiday related requests for absence the Headteacher should consider the Welsh Government School Attendance Codes Guidance 2010.

4. Early Intervention

4.1 Our school recognise the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by text message, social media, leaflets, parents' evenings, school reports and the school website.

4.2 When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. Where possible work will be provided to ensure that the pupil can keep as up to date as possible with the curriculum.

4.3 The EWO, in conjunction with all the schools in the cluster, will ensure that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.

Head teachers and school staff are encouraged to try new strategies and continually seek to try and promote positive attendance.

<u>How we aim to reduce absence and improve continuity of learning for all</u>

4.6 Our school will always seek to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents / carers. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit from parents the support deemed necessary to ensure pupils attend school, parents may receive letters which:

- Request reasons for their child's absence;
- Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
- Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
- Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their support in getting their child to school on time;
- Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence and the consequences of this in relation to penalty notices and involvement of EWS (Education Welfare Service);
- Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
- Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice;
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

4.7 In some circumstances following warning letters, the school may seek further advice and recommendation from EWS or request that the EWS issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. The school should warn a parent when their child's attendance is approaching the criteria for a penalty notice.

4.8 The criteria for issuing a penalty notice is set by the Local Authority.

The criterion for considering a penalty notice is currently 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 pupil's overall attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive).

Unauthorised absences include: -

-unauthorised non-attendance at school;

-unauthorised holidays in term-time; and

-unauthorised late arrival after registration has closed.

Should the Local Authority alter the criteria for issuing a penalty notice the newly published code of conduct will take precedence over the criteria set out in this paragraph.

4.9 When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. A referral might be made when, for example:

- A pattern of irregular unauthorised attendance has developed;
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established with the pupil attendance dropping to below 85% with unauthorised absences.
- There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance; or
- A pattern of truancy is persisting.

4.10 Our school does liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

4.11 Before considering whether to make a referral to the local authority, action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems, such as:

- bullying
- experience of racism
- caring responsibilities
- ill health
- unmet SEN, or unidentified ALN or disability

5. Role of the Education Welfare Service

5.1 The Headteacher and senior staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records through SIMS for each pupil.

5.2 The Local Authority Education Welfare Officer meets regularly with every school in the cluster to discuss individual cases of absenteeism, truancy or lateness and reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions to date. Decisions are taken at this time as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral

to the EWS. As a result of the EWO's overview of the whole cluster, the EWO will strive to promote consistency when working with a family that might have children in more than one cluster school.

5.3 The school and EWO should make use of attendance data to try and identify trends or problems and to evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies.

6. School Targets

6.1 Parents are informed of their child's attendance regularly.

6.2 The target for the school is set annually by Governors and reported in their annual report to parents.

6.3 Attendance is reported to governors in every termly meeting via the head teacher report.

Children missing in Education (CME)

If there are concerns that the pupil's family have moved out of the area, without leaving a forwarding address/name of new school, the school must follow the Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) protocol and make every effort to find the pupil by all means necessary before forwarding the case to the EWS for further tracking.

Appendix 1 – Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices

This letter alerts you to the use of penalty notices for unauthorised absences from school.

PCC believes that any absence from school, for whatever reason, is detrimental to a child's long term life opportunities, so should be avoided if at all possible. Reducing absence from school is a key priority, both nationally and locally, because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

A penalty notice is an available option with the aim of seeking to secure an improvement in the pupil's attendance. A penalty notice can be requested by a Head teacher, their authorised deputy or assistant head teacher, the police and neighbouring local authorities.

If a notice has been requested and the relevant checklist has been completed by PCC, should PCC accept the request the parent will receive a formal written warning notifying them that they may receive a penalty notice and providing a period of 15 school days to allow the parent to respond. During the 15 days, parents would have the right to provide any evidence they may wish to present to the school, including medical evidence, to argue that the penalty notice should not be issued. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent, it will be for the Head teacher/authorised person in the school to determine whether the evidence is accepted, and the register amended.

If evidence is not provided or the Head teacher/authorised person does not accept the evidence, then the Head teacher should notify PCC and a penalty notice can be issued by PCC by first class post.

- If payment of £60 is made within 28 days of receipt of the notice, there will be no further action.
- If the payment of £60 is not made within 28 days of receipt of the notice, the penalty rises to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt of the notice.
- If payment of £120 is made within 42 days of receipt of the notice, there will be no further action.
- If payment is not made pursuant to the notice, then the notice will either be withdrawn or the offence will be prosecuted under Education Act 1996 section 444.

Please remember that if there are reasons why your child is missing school then you can seek support and guidance from staff at your child's school. Please do ask before the non-attendance becomes an issue. www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/schoolattendance

Appendix 2 – PCC Penalty Notices Leaflet

The cost of a Penalty Notice

If a notice is required the parent will be given a 15 day warning. During this period they will have the opportunity to provide evidence which demonstrates why a notice should not be issued. It will be for the school to determine if the evidence is accepted.

There are no limits to the number of formal warnings for a penalty notice that can be issued.

Legal Practicalities.

If the school attendance does not improve the penalty notice is

£60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice;

this rises to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt;

if the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days the Local Authority must either prosecute for the offence or withdraw the notice*.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full then the Local Authority (LA) will consider prosecution for the original offence, which is **'failing to secure the child's regular attendance at school'** under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

* *only in exceptional circumstances see Code of Conduct.*

Support with School Attendance

Please remember that if there are reasons why your child is missing school then keep the school informed.

If your child is off school then speak to the school as early as possible on the first day of their absence.

Your child is expected to be in school for 190 days an academic year with 175 days off due to weekends and school holidays.

Further information on the issuing of Penalty Notices can be obtained from your child's school or from the Early Intervention Officer, Pupil Support Service.

For more information please visit
www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/schoolattendance

or email:
educationpn@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

or call:
01437 764551

My Account
myaccount.pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Pembrokeshire County Council
Cyngor Sir Penfro

Pupil Support Service

School Attendance

PENALTY NOTICES

Information for parents / carers & pupils

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Penalty Notices

Welsh Government has instructed all local authorities to implement Penalty Notices under the Welsh Government Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 from September 2014.

Pembrokeshire County Council believe that any absence from school, for whatever reason, is detrimental to a child's long term life opportunities, so should be avoided if at all possible.

A Penalty Notice is a method of intervention with the aim of seeking to secure an improvement in the child's attendance at school.

Appealing against a Penalty Notice

There is no statutory right of appeal under the Regulations, but where a parent contests the issuing of a Penalty Notice they can contact the Pupil Support Service.

Who can receive a Penalty Notice

A notice will be issued to each parent in respect of each child under section 576 of the Education Act 1996

Definition of a parent

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).

Why should my child attend school every day

100% attendance	Best chance of success!
95% attendance	Poor attendance will impact on learning.
90% attendance	
85% attendance	Very poor attendance has a significant impact on learning.
80% attendance	

A penalty notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

A penalty notice may be issued:

The key criteria is 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 pupil's overall attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive).

***unauthorised absences include:-**

- unauthorised non-attendance at school;
- unauthorised holidays in term-time; and
- unauthorised late arrival after registration has closed.

Appendix 3 – School Letter 1

Dear

Re: _____

Attendance xx%

As you will be aware attendance at school is a key focus and we want all our parents to be aware of the opportunities that could be missed if your child does not attend school on a regular basis.

At present, the Register shows that your child has been absent for XX days and this causes concern.

The school target for excellent school attendance is __%.

If you would like any advice or support with this matter, please contact .....

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 4 – School Letter 2

Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Attendance

Re; …… **d.o.b**…….

Attendance: ...% (Authorised Absence: …%; Unauthorised Absence:…%)

I am writing to you as I previously spoke / wrote to you on the XXXXXXX 2021 as we had concerns regarding the level of absence of XXXXX from our school.

I am further concerned to see that XXXXXXXXX has had further absences since my last letter /our last phonecall.

I would therefore ask you to attend a meeting with XXXXX on XX (date) at XXXam / pm in order that we can have a face to face meeting / virtual meeting via Teams regarding XXX's absences and XX and any further support the school can offer you / your family.

We want to work with you to sort out any problems relating to attendance however you must understand that if your child does not attend school regularly the County Council has the power to bring cases before the Magistrates Court or issue a Penalty Notice. Any absence above 15% would require the school to make a referral to the Pembrokeshire County Council Education Department for investigation.

I look forward to seeing you.

Yours sincerely,

Head teacher

Appendix 5 – Medical Evidence Request Letter

Parent/Carer of ……

Address

Ref:

Date:

Parent/Carer,

Re; …… **d.o.b**…….

School; **Form**; ……

It has been brought to my attention that _____ is frequently absent from school with illness. Currently ….has been absent for ….% of this school term/year.

This is to inform you that for any further absences due to illness medical evidence may be requested, such as a dated appointment card, a white label from prescribed medication, or a prescription slip. Please note, we do **not** need a sick note or a GP letter. If we do not receive such evidence, further absences for minor ailments may not be authorised by the school.

Should you need any further clarification please contact me on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

* Medical evidence can be in the form of:

- A copy of medical appointment letters or cards
- Evidence of the medicine bottle