

Ysgol Gelli Aur
Golden Grove School



Attendance Policy

Golden Grove School – Attendance Policy

A Whole School Policy on Attendance

A whole school attendance policy is one that requires commitment from all staff employed within the school, together with governors, parents, pupils and the LEA.

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 pupils do not attend school, they cannot be educated. Good attendance and punctuality leads to the best learning outcomes.

Philosophy Statement

- Golden Grove School aims to encourage and assist all pupils to achieve 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 paramount. 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 our pupils. 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 efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times. We will involve the Pupil Support Service when appropriate to ensure a focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance.

Why is attendance important?

Learning and wellbeing are core elements in a young person's life. School attendance plays a key role in developing positive outcomes in this respect. Regular school attendance is very important for all children and young people. Failure to attend school increases the risk of leaving school without qualifications and allows greater opportunity for young people to be drawn into crime and antisocial behaviour. It can also leave some young people vulnerable to harm by adults.

Principles

The school will;

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive suitable in-service training on registration regulations and education law.
- Complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning session and afternoon session.
- Promote 'First Day Calling' to parents/carers.

- Reward good and improved attendance by individual, class or year group.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after a period of absence.
- Consult with all members of the school community and the Pupil Support Service in developing and maintaining the Whole School Attendance Policy.
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- To have procedures in place that allows absentees to catch up on missed work, without disrupting the learning of other class members.

How we will know the strategy is working: Key Outcomes

If the strategy is working, then the key outcomes we would expect to see are:

- Attendance targets in place that are agreed annually
- Improved levels of attendance
- Reduced absence for holidays in term time
- Reduced numbers of pupils missing for unauthorised absence
- Whole school attendance policy in place
- First day absence procedures
- Accurate termly and annual attendance data provided to WAG
- Pupils educated at home being monitored in accordance with DfES guidance
- Contracts being offered to all parents/carers where there are concerns about their child's attendance
- All pupils removed from school rolls in Pembrokeshire without a known destination being identified to the Inclusion Service and included on the national missing pupil database
- Information sharing agreements in place with all partner agencies to identify vulnerable pupils

Procedures

- Class teachers will be responsible for the timely and accurate completion of daily registers using the electronic system G2. Where this is not possible, e.g. due to system malfunction, a register will be completed manually and handed in to the admin officer by 9:20, clearly showing which pupils are absent.
- Late arrivals at the school will only be processed through the main entrance where a record will be made of the time and reason for lateness. The daily register will be updated with this information and the notes against the pupil's name will be updated with LATE, TIME, REASON & CODE.
- Once the daily registers have been completed and updated with late attenders, the TRUANCY CALL system will be activated.
- The register will be updated from responses to Truancy Call. Where there is doubt about the validity or truthfulness of the response, the FLO or a member of SMT will be informed.
- If no response is forthcoming from parents/carers to Truancy Call by 10:00, a Call Parents Text will be sent or a phone call will be made to establish the reasons for absence.
- If there is no response to the text or phone call, a letter will be sent to the parents by Royal Mail on the same day. (Appendix 2)
- On the third consecutive day of absence without a reason being given, the FLO will liaise with the SMT with regard to making a second phone call to parents/carers or a possible house visit. In the case of a visit being made, two

members of staff will attend. On attending the home address they will attempt to get the reasons for absence and will serve the parent/carer with a letter. If there is no reply to the house call, the letter will be posted through the letter box. (*Appendix 3*).

- A letter will also be sent if a child is late arriving at school and an explanation has not been received from the parents/carers (*Appendix 4*).
- After a maximum of 10 days absence (these do not have to be consecutive), invite the parents/carers into school. This meeting will include a senior member of staff, parents/carers and the pupil. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties that are preventing the pupil from attending school.
- If this meeting does not result in the pupil attending school or their attendance drops below 80%, consider referral to the school's designated LA Attendance Officer. The Inclusion Service will ensure that the parents/carers are aware of the legal requirements regarding regular school attendance.
- Adopt and implement an Individual Reintegration Plan (IRP) where a pupil is returning after any absence lasting longer than two weeks. The IRP will include members of the school staff and will be designed to be as supportive as possible to the pupil. The LA Attendance Officer can assist in the development of the IRP.
- **A request to the Local Authority for a penalty notice can be made by the school, police or from within the local authority itself in relation to poor attendance at school.**

Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by;

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately and the systems for recording pupil attendance.
- Using attendance codes consistently.
- Regularly analysing attendance data.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance.
- Formalising early links with parents.
- Encouraging the home-school agreements to be completed.
- Liaising closely with the schools' Pupil Support Officer.
- Recording information regarding contact with parents and carers.

Evaluation

It is important to set realistic targets. These targets will be set in consultation with the LEA. The school needs to be aware of the interventions that have been successful as part of the evaluation process. When evaluating success, 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, both within the school, governing body, parents and the local community
- The frequency of evaluation, with termly updates in the school governors meetings
- Attendance issues are to be included as topics in school assemblies and Personal and Social Education (PSE) discussions

Legal Framework

Statutory Responsibilities

Under the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their children receive efficient full time education. Section 7 of the 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 educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

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.

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

- The pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence).
- The pupil was medically 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 or parents/carers belong.
- The catchment school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and the Local Authority has made no suitable transport arrangements. The law relating to 'walking distance' is effectively defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Distances will be measured by the nearest available walking route.
- A limited defence is available to the parents of travelling children.

The act also places a legal obligation on:

- The Local Authority to secure that efficient education is available to meet the needs of its population and to enforce attendance.
- Schools to register attendance and notify the Local Authority of a child's absence from school (Welsh Assembly circular 47/2006) and the Education (Pupil Registration) Amendment Regulations 1997.

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 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 notice. A penalty notice is a fine of up to £120 and may be issued to a parent / carer as a result of a child's regular non-attendance at school / education provision.

Categories of absence

Unauthorised absence is perceived as truancy and may result in the involvement of the Inclusion Service. This could ultimately lead to the prosecution of the parents/carers. Information for parents/carers linking the number of days absent with the number of lessons missed can be found in *Appendix 5*.

Within the categories of authorised and unauthorised absence, there are a range of codes which we use to accurately mark the register in order to denote the precise reason for absence. These codes are shown in *Appendix 6*.

It is only the school who may decide whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised. A letter or telephone call does not in itself authorise an absence; only the school's acceptance of the explanation offered authorises the absence.

Absence from school will be authorised 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.
- Sleeping late.
- No uniform.
- Looking after brothers or sisters.
- Minding the home.
- Birthdays.

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

The willingness of some schools to accept weak excuses for absences undermines other steps they take to ensure good attendance.

Non-attendance in the early years is approved by parents. This will soon become a pattern and establishes poor attitudes towards school. Young children do not play truant from school, they are off because their parents allow it. Evidence shows that children who miss significant amounts of their education in Primary school are more likely to truant later on.

In the document by Charlie Taylor (the Government's Expert Advisor on Behaviour) he states that "The majority of children whose parents are taken to court for bad attendance are in Years 10 and 11, but by this time it is often too late for prosecution to solve the attendance problems."

Authorised Absence

Only a school can authorise an absence. Parents and the Local Authority do not have this power.

- It is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually.
- Golden Grove School is not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation.
- Golden Grove School should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties.
- **An explanation is required for every absence.** If one is not forthcoming the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- Where absence is authorised, Golden Grove School 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.

Absence During Term Time (Holidays)

Where such leave is sanctioned it constitutes authorised absence. Where holidays of more than two weeks duration are in order to visit family members living overseas, schools may find it helpful to discuss with parents the most appropriate time of year and point in the pupil's educational career for the visit. This could be timed to minimise the effects on the continuity of the pupil's education. In cases where approval is given for such a holiday, schools may wish to consider making up a study pack or setting assignments to complete whilst he or she is away.

The regulations clearly make the point that the Headteacher has the final decision as to whether to authorise the holiday. A clear procedure for requested leave of absence should be available to parents and included in the school's prospectus and policy statement.

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. Therefore, the decision taken by the school to give or withhold authorisation for an absence is a critical factor in determining the Local Authority's decision to prosecute parents. (Pro forma – see Appendix 7)

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. The decision taken by the school is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the Inclusion Service. If the school has authorised an absence they have, in effect, given leave and therefore there is no case in law for the parents to answer.

Lateness

A pupil's punctuality for school is a legal requirement (Welsh Assembly circular 47/2006) and the parents/carers of a pupil who is consistently late are guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted.

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/carers and pupil need to work in partnership to resolve the 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 Inclusion Service.**

Parents/carers and pupils should be made aware that arrival after registration has closed will be marked as an unauthorised absence. *Appendix 4* contains a letter to parents/carers about late arrival. *Appendix 9* has additional information for parents/carers explaining the importance of punctuality.

Parents should also be made aware that with the introduction of Penalty Notice legislation lateness is also defined as an unauthorised absence and therefore under the Code of conduct, a Penalty Notice can be issued for persistent lateness after the register has closed. Please refer to ERW Code of Conduct.

Parentally condoned absence

Parentally condoned absence is often more difficult to identify than 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 (Welsh Assembly Circular 47/2006, p73). Such procedures would indicate a request, usually made by the LA Attendance Officer for medical advice from the school nurse via the community medical officer regarding non-school attendance.

1. The 5-step Approach to attendance management

The 5-step Approach has been developed in response to research and details five steps within attendance management. As well as highlighting processes, the model:

- Details procedures that school would undertake.
- Identifies when a referral to the Inclusion Service for support from the LA Attendance Officer would be appropriate.

STEP 5: STATUTORY ACTION

- Implementation of statutory action within the guidelines of the 1996 Education Act

STEP 4: CASE REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

- Individual plan formulated
- Education Planning Meetings
- Formal Legal Education Planning Meeting
- Formal warning letters
- Consideration of statutory action

STEP 3: REFERRAL MADE TO LA ATTENDANCE OFFICER

- Individual pupil referrals based on attendance data and discussions with school attendance leaders
- Formal referral forms completed
- Letters sent to parents and services
- LA to consider Penalty Notice

STEP 2: SCHOOL SEEK ADVICE FROM LA ATTENDANCE OFFICER

- LA Attendance Officer to act in a consultative capacity to assist schools with alternative strategies
- LA Attendance Officer to support the school considering other agency/service advice and action as appropriate
- ***PENALTY NOTICE** – schools to consider request to LA – see Code of Conduct

STEP 1: SCHOOL BASED INTERVENTIONS

- School to implement policies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance between 80-90%
- School attendance policy and the review of attendance data form part of both the school Senior Management Team and the Governors meeting agenda
- School attendance initiatives are made explicit to all pupils, staff and families through a Whole School Approach

Further information about the role of school and the role of the Inclusion Service in relation to this 5-step Approach to attendance management can be found in this policy. It is important to note that in order for legal action to be initiated at Step 5, absences must be recorded as unauthorised. This is because authorisation of an absence by the school constitutes a statutory defence to Section 444 of the Education Act, 1996.

Work to be undertaken by schools within the 5-step Approach

Step 1 – School Based Interventions: The Headteacher, Mr Andrew Williams, has overall responsibility for attendance matters. Initial school interventions include:

- First Day of Absence contact made with parents/carers by telephone, text or e-mail.

- Working with parents/carers and pupils to identify underlying causes of non-attendance, for example, medical needs, bullying, social difficulties, disaffection, lateness, ALN.
- Developing and adopting in-school policies to identify underlying problems and, where appropriate, to develop realistic strategies to address these difficulties.
- Consideration should be given to the involvement of other services or agencies which could assist in addressing the complex causes of absenteeism.

Step 2 – School Based interventions in Conjunction with Advice Taken from the LA Attendance Officer: Where school-based interventions are still considered to be providing support at an appropriate level, expertise and advice may be sought from the LA Attendance Officer. They can work with the school in a consultative capacity, assisting in identifying possible alternative strategies. This will be done by liaising with the school's senior manager who has responsibility for attendance or with other relevant school staff.

Although no formal referral is made to the LA Attendance Officer at this stage, it would be good practice to record the consultation in case a formal referral is made in the future. In some situations, parents/carers contact the Attendance Officer directly. In these circumstances, Step1 intervention may be considered appropriate.

Step 3 – School Referral made to LA Attendance Officer: When considering this, school have to judge whether all the intervention strategies available to them have been considered or put in place together with their effectiveness. The LA Attendance Officer would assess the content of the referral in conjunction with the information gathered at Step 2. Referrals could be considered in the following circumstances:

- Block absences of more than 20 sessions without explanation.
- Irregular patterns of attendance with frequent unauthorised or medical absences.
- A prolonged poor attendance pattern.
- Pupils with less than 80% attendance in a term period.
- Children at risk who exhibit poor or irregular attendance.
- Suspicious absences without medical corroboration.
- Known truants.
- School refusers.
- Absences connected with possible child welfare or safeguarding issues.
- Sudden deterioration in attendance without any specific reason and no explanation given.
- Pupils who are persistently late after close of registration

A copy of the referral form can be found in *Appendix 10*. When deciding whether it is appropriate to make a referral, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- Is the LA Attendance Officer the correct agency to undertake the task? Would, for example, an Educational Psychologist, Youth Worker, School Nurse be better placed to offer support?
- Is the timing appropriate?
- What is the desired outcome of the intended referral?
- What will the impact be on others, for example, parents/carers or siblings?
- Have the parents/carers been advised by the school that a referral is being considered?

- Has the school considered requesting a Penalty Notice from the LA, as an early intervention strategy? See ERW Code of Conduct.

The referral form requests factual evidence and it is essential that this is provided for case management and review as well as for providing statistical data to schools, governors and the Local Authority. In addition, the following must be attached to the referral form:

- A copy of the pupil's school attendance record.
- Information about contacts and meetings with parents, including the date, time and outcome.
- Information about any contacts/referrals with/to other services/agencies.
- In order to ensure the health and safety of the Attendance Officer, any details of concern or known risk factors associated with the pupil, their parents/carers and family or the geographical location of the home, must also be included.
- If it is necessary for the process to continue from Steps 3 to 5, the school will continue to work closely with and support the interventions undertaken by the Inclusion Service.

School roles	Responsibilities
Headteacher (School Attendance Lead)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set challenging targets to meet national averages for the school overall. Ensure strategy is devised to make solid progress towards them. • Ensure there is sufficient time to analyse data, liaise with teachers and Local Authority officers. Give the Attendance Lead the full responsibility to lead on whole school policy and strategy. • Receive reports on attendance at whole school, year group and class level. Discuss both strengths and weaknesses publicly and give attendance a high status in the school. Talk personally to teachers whose classes show poor attendance. Encourage these teachers to take responsibility for making improvements. • Take a personal interest in attendance and support intervention with the poorest attenders. • Report statistics to the Attendance Governor and as part of the termly report to governors. Show comparative figures, not isolated statistics. Compare each half-term's figures with those for the previous year at the same time. • Monitor attendance weekly and evaluate progress towards the targets. Identify

	<p>pupils who are likely to jeopardise the school’s performance and plan early intervention to avoid bad habits being established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor attendance at school, year group and class level. Work in strong collaboration with the staff to praise strengths and point out weaknesses. • Ensure there is a clear attendance policy, showing who will do what and at what threshold. • Keep attendance at the forefront of each member of staff’s mind. Convince all staff that attendance is their responsibility. • Promote regular attendance, by making use of reward systems, assemblies, parents’ evenings, performance reviews, etc. • Involve the governing body and seek the support of governors in promoting good attendance. • Supervise administrative staff. Ensure registers are checked daily and that the required action at each threshold level is taken at the earliest moment possible. Discourage any sense of collusion with parents who allow absence without good reason. • Revise strategy to address issues with each individual pupil or family.
<p>Class Teacher/ FLO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not accept poor attendance. Make 100% attendance the expectation. • Promote regular attendance through rewards and other encouragement. Make it your business and make it clear that poor or erratic attendance is not expected or acceptable. • Ensure that registers are always completed appropriately; never leave blank spaces. Never complete in pencil. Never amend with correction fluid. • Look carefully at attendance data. Make it your business to spot patterns of absence and overall levels of attendance of individuals. • Make a personal connection with parents of pupils who have regular absence, or patterns of irregular attendance. • Ensure the Head teacher/FLO is informed of concerns over attendance. • Following absence, do your best to provide catch-up opportunities so absentees do not fall behind. Where appropriate, ask parents to play a part in reinforcing missed learning.
<p>Attendance Administrator (FLO and School Admin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow the school’s procedures for first day calling. If no explanation has been received by the time registers close, seek one. • Be prepared to be assertive. Parents must explain absence. Explanations need to be plausible. Avoid any sense of collusion with parents over unnecessary absence.

Officer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not show sympathy over absence unless you are convinced it is genuine. • Issue attendance letters where required. Make sure they have the effect intended. Do not tolerate a lack of response. Seek advice when you need it. • Hold regular discussions with the Attendance Lead. Ensure the system works. If it does not, come up with suggestions to improve it. • Advise the Attendance lead of any teacher who fails to maintain the register properly. Registers are legal documents and must be kept carefully and accurately. • Provide data on weekly basis to class teachers and the school's Attendance Lead. • Make sure the Attendance Lead and/or the Head teacher know about families where bad habits are forming. Make sure action is taken to break bad habits at the earliest opportunity. • Assist the Attendance Lead, School Attendance Officer and others in collating data for inclusion in reports, attendance returns, etc. • Check and file all absence notes that are received, and ensure that details are reflected appropriately through categorisation of absence in the registers. • Pass messages from parents efficiently to the class teacher or other relevant member of staff.
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See Attendance Action Plan for the strategies the school uses for promoting good attendance, including the use of reward systems.

PENALTY 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 LAs within ERW are 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 truanting and associated anti-social activities.

Parents / carers and pupils are supported at a school 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 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;
- where parents/carers have failed to engage with the school/and or LA in attempts to improve attendance.

It should be noted that penalty 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 2014/5

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, states that each request should be considered individually.

Advice from the Local Authority and from ERW 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 Notices are an early intervention tool and contribute drive towards improving school attendance and related outcomes for our children and young people in terms of attainment.

For further information on Penalty Notices please refer to the Code of Conduct which can be found on the E Portal and also at:

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/schoolattendance

http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/content.asp?nav=647,736&parent_directory_id=64

The effect of bullying on attendance

- Pupils may not attend school because they are afraid of bullying or behaviour which may frighten or alarm them. All too often, pupils do not feel safe on their way to and from school. This emotional impact can increase truancy rates and encourage premature school dropouts.
- Dr Professor Richard Williams, Professor of Mental Health Strategy at the University of Glamorgan stated that 'despite the common occurrences of bullying and our tendency to see it as a part of everyday school life, we have learned in the last twenty years how damaging bullying can be to the wellbeing and mental and physical health of children and young people. Even verbal references to the physical characteristics of young people are very damaging. Accumulative erosion of self-esteem is considerable.'
- Children who are bullied often 'absent' themselves from school and may present to their doctors with a variety of emotional and physical symptoms.
- Golden Grove School will consider bullying being a possibility when investigating cases of poor attendance and will promptly address the problem by adopting procedures and practices in a whole-school approach, emphasised by the school's anti-bullying policy.

The role of the Inclusion Service

The Inclusion Service assists the Local Authority to fulfil its statutory responsibilities in promoting and enforcing school attendance, in particular, promoting access to education for all children, including pupils at risk of underachieving. It also intervenes following reports of illegal child employment. The Welsh Assembly circular 47/2006 (Sec 4, p9) states:

It is of crucial importance to establish an effective working relationship between schools and the Education Welfare Service.

The Inclusion Service works closely with schools and families to resolve attendance and welfare issues. The LA Attendance Officers are designated to every secondary school, responding to the needs as they arise in that school and their feeder primary schools. They receive regular ongoing developmental training and supervision support from the System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance.

Key functions of the Inclusion Service in relation to attendance

The Inclusion Service uses Social Work methods to:

- Promote and enforce regular school attendance.
- Work in partnership with schools, families and other agencies to improve attendance and, in the first instance, reduce unauthorised absence at school.
- Promote and monitor the achievements/attendance of Looked After Children, linking with the advisory teacher for Looked After Children.
- Contribute to interagency decision making in relation to young people who offend and are involved in truancy.
- Assist schools to identify children in need of protection and children in need of support services.
- Assist the schools to address any issues involving bullying which may prevent the pupil accessing their education.

The LA Attendance Officer 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 pupil's parents/carers. Schools should therefore consider the most effective ways of giving all staff access to the LA Attendance Officer and an understanding of their role and responsibilities.

Child Employment - The service is also responsible for licensing and ensuring compliance with the by-laws relating to the employment of children, and children engaged in entertainment and Chaperone Licensing.

Children Missing Education (CME)

School aged children residing in Pembrokeshire have the right to receive an appropriate education and the vast majority of children are doing so. However, there are a number of ways a child fails to access the school system and hence becomes missing from education. It is vital that all schools within Pembrokeshire are proactive in ensuring that as far as possible, children and young people are not lost to education and that when families inform schools of relocation, all relevant information in regard to destination, forwarding addresses, new schools etc... is sought. It is not acceptable to de-register a child with only minimal information on where the family are moving to.

If Golden Grove School is aware a family have moved away without accessing a school place, or without notification to the school, the LA Attendance Officer will visit the address, speak to neighbours and try to ascertain where the family / child have moved to. Please see Appendix 15 for the CME form and guidance notes when referring a child who is believed to be CME. The LA Attendance Officer will then advise appropriately and liaise with other Authorities where necessary.

The Inclusion Service will:

- Co-ordinate, through multi-agency work, the identification, referral, tracking and engagement of children missing or at risk of missing education
- Manage the co-ordination of the referral process
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders in Pembrokeshire to develop the already existing inter agency network so that all members are aware of the referral process for pupils who are missing or at risk of missing education
- Manage a central database of all children missing or at risk of missing education in the borough and monitor the effectiveness of interventions and placements
- Identify and allocate a lead professional in relation to Children Missing Education (John Bearne)
- Follow robust tracking and monitoring systems to confirm residency of children moving out of the county
- Raise awareness of the service and provide guidance/advice to all schools and lead professionals in the borough regarding children missing education

Referral process

The points school should consider before making a referral to the LA Attendance Officer have already been detailed. It is important that all school staff understand when it is appropriate to make a referral and the procedures for doing so.

Work undertaken by the Inclusion Service within the 5-step Approach

The school could seek the advice of the LA Attendance Officer at Step 2 but their formal involvement would begin on receipt of a referral from school at Step 3 of the model.

Step 3 – Referral made to the LA Attendance Officer: If the referral is assessed and judged to be appropriate, the LA Attendance Officer will consider actions which could include:

- Making a home visit.
- Writing/telephoning/e-mailing parents/carers.
- Meeting the pupil in school with appropriate school staff.
- Meeting the pupil and parents/carers in school with appropriate school staff.
- Supporting the school in drawing up a contract between the school, Inclusion Officer, parents/carers and the pupil

A home visit will enable the LA Attendance Officer to:

- Assess the family circumstances.
- Inform parents of their obligations in respect of school attendance.
- Provide advice and support to families

Step 4 – Case review and assessment: If there is little or no improvement following Step 3 intervention, the situation will be reviewed in discussion with the System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance and, if appropriate, other involve agencies.

Consideration will be given to a number of complementary strategies. These may include:

- Discussion with System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance to facilitate an Education Planning Meeting.
- Intensive monitoring of the pupil's attendance.
- A time limited in-depth programme of support working with the family.
- Referral to other agencies/services.
- Sending formal warning letters.
- Holding Legal Planning Meetings.
- Developing Parenting Contracts as detailed in the WAG Inclusion and Pupil Support Circular 47/2006.
- Consideration will be given to Statutory Intervention (Step 5).

Step 5 – Statutory Action: Where there is a need to implement statutory action, the following questions will be considered by the Inclusion Service:

- Is the case suitable for placing before the Family Court with regard to an Education Supervision Order under sect. 36 of the Children Act 1989?
- Are the absences in the attendance register shown as unauthorised?
- Has consideration been given to all possible intervention or support?
- Have the parents/carers co-operated with the school/Local Authority in supporting the pupil?
- Are there any other circumstances that mitigate against prosecuting at this stage?

Where the above criteria have been met, the LA Attendance Officer will discuss the case with the manager of the Service and the Local Authority's legal department for consideration with regard to prosecution.

Support for groups of pupils at particular risk

Certain pupils have the potential to pose a particular risk in terms of attendance and may need additional support from the Inclusion Service to ensure regular attendance.

The Service may be able to provide additional advice and support to schools for these pupils and their families, for example, by making referrals to other agencies such as Team Around the Family (TAF). They can also assist with issues around welfare, safeguarding or child protection including referrals to the Child Care Assessment Team (CCAT).

These vulnerable groups could include:

- Pupils with Additional Learning Needs.
- Children in the care of the Local Authority. (All absences authorised and unauthorised should be monitored and reported to the Inclusion Service).
- Young carers.
- Children from ethnic and cultural minorities.
- Asylum seeker families.
- Pupils from families experiencing Domestic Abuse.
- Children with health/medical problems.
- Teenage mothers.
- Children from families under stress.
- Children and young people facing emotional and psychological difficulties
- Pupils identified as being within protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010).

Inclusion Service

School Performance Cards (RAG Scorecards) have focussed LA Attendance Officers to individual schools and an increase in visits for whole school attendance as well as individual cases. The Performance Cards also highlight positive aspects of attendance. All LA Attendance Officers also liaise with their Challenge Advisors with regard to Attendance. The monthly reporting has had a great effect on targeting areas of support, and deeper analysis of data, for example by Year Group.

System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance

The System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance manages the team of Attendance Officers and within the role, is developing strategies to improve attendance and share best practice. The System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance is also responsible for ensuring good practice within the team and completing key action points for the Performance Management Board.

Welfare

Transport – There may be occasions where a parent is unable to take their child to school through ill health or injury. In this instance, the LA Attendance Officer will investigate the case, transport links, family support etc. and if necessary request a short term transport assistance from the transport department.

Mid Term Transfers – Mid-term transfers are disruptive to both the child who wishes to move schools during the school term, and also to others in the class and year group. The Admissions Officer will refer any such cases to the LA Attendance Officer to advise on the validity and necessity of such transfers and the LA Attendance Officer will then make a judgement based on discussion with both the school and

parents. It is our aim to reduce the amount of mid-term transfers. Exceptions may include;

Agreed Terms of Mid Term Transfer:

- Move of house / Out of Catchment area to new area.
- Bullying – persistent and unresolved. May involve breakdown between parent / child and school.
- Child Protection.
- Health – if medical evidence provided and sufficient to transfer mid-term.
- Language Barrier (Welsh medium to other mainstream).

Reasons for Decline of Request for Mid Term Transfer:

- Parents have not contacted current school.
- No attempt by school / parent to resolve issue.
- Pressure of parent to EHE if transfer not agreed.
- Parent refuses to send child to school where they are on roll.

Uniform and Discretionary Uniform Grants

A Local Authority is given powers to provide financial assistance to parents in accordance with 5510(3) Chapter 11 part IX of the Education Act 1996 as amended by section 14 of the Education Act 2002. The discretionary grant is awarded for the provision of essential school uniform only. In exceptional circumstances assistance is given to provide footwear. The Authority does not provide assistance towards the purchase of sportswear.

Public Information

Pembrokeshire Local Authority provides information on clothing grants in Secondary School brochures. Information is also available at school open evenings. In addition, details are available via Pembrokeshire County Council's website.

Application forms and information sheets are available from the Revenues Services, County Hall, Haverfordwest, 01437 764551.

Eligibility for Grant

1. Parents and children should be residents of Pembrokeshire though children may attend school in another Authority
2. The child is a Secondary School pupil of compulsory school age though in exceptional circumstances and, at the discretion of the System Leader for Behaviour and Attendance or Principal Revenues Officer, a grant may be awarded to a child who does not meet this criteria. Schools should refer any such requests to their LA Attendance Officer.

Good practice guidelines for schools

Keeping the registers

The register is a legal document; it must be kept accurately and records need to be retained for four years. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute data to pupils' end of term reports, records of achievement and to leavers' references.

Since 2008, regulations require the submission to Welsh Government of attendance data for all pupils of compulsory school age as part of PLASC.

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 Pembrokeshire Schools will follow Welsh Government guidance and adhere to the common standards and suggested codes when recording absences in the register (Appendix 6).

Marking the registers

- All schools use electronic software to record and collect attendance data. There should be a nominated member of administrative staff with IT skills who has key responsibility for ensuring that the data is accurately recorded.
- 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.
- The register is open for 30 minutes after the start of each session (Welsh Assembly circular 47/2006, Annex 4.i, p.4). 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, they 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, the absence must be marked as unauthorised.
- Pupils should only be removed from the class register following authorisation from the Headteacher and in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995. The Local Authority should be informed.
- Registers should be totalled at the end of each week, electronic packages calculate this automatically and the percentage attendance should be monitored.
- Registers should be readily accessible to authorised officers such as LA Attendance Officers to allow for easy checking of pupils' attendance patterns.
- Schools should keep a current class register and print a daily list of pupils absent from that class for use in an emergency, for example, a fire drill.

- Schools need to have systems in place for monitoring the attendance of pupils being educated off-site.
- A print must be made of a computerised admission register not less than once a year. The governing body must register with the Data Protection Registrar as a data user under the Data Protection Act 1984. Any detailed enquiries on the Act should be referred to the Data Protection Registrar on 01625-545745.

Analysis of attendance data

The attendance figures are analysed and evaluated every half term by the Local Authority. The results are sent to schools and this data allows us 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, disaffection with certain subjects, teachers or teaching groups. Such analysis can also draw attention to the deterioration or improvement in the attendance of individual pupils.

The analysis can help to target intervention more selectively and help to establish the causes of absence. Administrative staff, if appropriately trained, can help in terms of the data collection and the input of data.

Local Authority Analysis – LA Attendance Officers conduct monthly analysis on each school within their area in order to ensure correct coding of registers, consistency of approach and to advise on attendance issues.

Evaluation

It is important to set attendance targets as there is a statutory requirement to do this yearly. The targets have to be agreed by the school governors and set in consultation with the Local Authority. The school needs to be aware of the interventions that have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success, 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, both within the school, governing body, parents/carers and the local community.
- The governors are given termly updates on the attendance levels and trends.
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons, or enhanced citizenship.

Resources and information available to schools in managing attendance

Primary school resources available on the e-portal include:

- Examples of research, documents and good practice.
- Sample letters re attendance and absence.

- Improving Attendance and Reducing Absence: Activities to use with whole classes or small groups of pupils.
- Overview of The Ant Project.
- Overview of Kids Talk and Parent Talk.
- Cross-reference to Chalkface – Attendance and Truancy Packs
- Overview of KS2/3 Transition Programmes
- Information about other resources that can be accessed via the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service, for example, the Anxiety Pack.