



Cwmffrwdor Primary School

Attendance Policy 2023

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

Introduction

Purpose:

To promote excellent attendance and consistent procedures to promote and encourage improved attendance.

Aim(s):

- To improve attendance to at least 95% for all pupils
- To reduce the difference between attendance of pupils affected by poverty and those that are not
- To develop a consistent rewards system to promote good attendance To
- develop a consistent approach to pupils and families who do not demonstrated positive attendance patterns.

Wider school aims/ethos:

Excellent attendance is an aspiration of the whole school community. It is underpinned by the schools vision, values and aims. Improving attendance is also part of the wide local and national improvement agenda.

Consultation:

This policy has been created from guidance from the LA and will be shared with pupils, parents, staff and governors.

Sources and references:

LA School Attendance Strategy 2022 - 2024

Principles/values:

Children and Young People must attend school full time to benefit from their education. This calls for the co-operation of the Local Authority, school governors, school staff, parents, carers, pupils and support from all of the bodies represented in the Children and Young People's Partnership and in the Community Safety Partnership.

Schools have a special responsibility to encourage full attendance – pupils who are not in school are not being educated and will not achieve their potential. This is both unsafe for the child or young person and is not acceptable legally and morally.

Staff Responsible for whole school attendance:

Mrs S Roque (Headteacher)

Mrs L Taylor, (Office Manager)

Mr. K Wharton (Deputy Head)

Acting Educational Welfare Officer – Mrs Hannah Kethro-Moore

Procedures and practice

Section 1: The law

The law defines compulsory school age as between 5 and 16 years old.

Parents

Parents must secure full-time education for children of compulsory school age. The education must be suited to the child's age, aptitude and ability, and to any special needs the child has. Parents can secure education for their child by registering the child with a school or in some other way. A child who is registered with a school must attend regularly and punctually.

The Local Authority

As a local authority (LA), Torfaen County Borough Council must ensure that:

- There are enough school places for the children in its area
- Parents secure full-time education for their children

Schools

Schools must:

- Record attendance at the start of the school day and during the afternoon on a paper or computer register
- Tell the LA if:
 - if a pupil fails to attend regularly
 - A pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row. The school should tell the LA why the pupil is absent if it knows.
- Record in the register whether absence is authorised or unauthorised
- Publish the percentage and number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the governor's annual report and prospectus
- Comment on any unauthorised absence in pupils' annual reports
- Allow the Local Authority to inspect the register during school hours.

¹ In this guide, we use 'parents' to mean 'parents, parent, carers or carer'

Legislation

Under **Section 7 of the Education Act 1996**, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age (5-16) receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child at home).

If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they must begin procedures for issuing a **School Attendance Order** under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under **Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996**. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him to attend (Education Act 1996, **Section 444(1A)** as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This offence requires proof that the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed to act. Under this aggravated offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction can lead to a custodial sentence.

Section 444(ZA) of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 116 of the Education Act 2005) will extend the circumstances in which a parent can be prosecuted for failing to ensure that a child for whom he is responsible attends regularly to include alternative provision that has been made for the child. An LA must consider applying for an **Education Supervision Order (ESO)** before prosecuting a parent (Children Act 1989, Section 36). An LA may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting the parent.

For further details please see the following documents:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education Act 2005
- Children Act 1989
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The special position of **Traveller families** is also recognised in law (section 444(6), Education Act 1996). Traveller parents are protected from conviction if the parent can demonstrate that:

- He or she is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as requires travel from place to place;
- The child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits;
- The child, where aged six or over, has attended school for at least 200 sessions (half days) during the preceding twelve months.

Section 2: Registers

The register is a legal document. It may be needed to use it as evidence in court. You must have clear procedures for completing the register. Teachers must fill it in, accurately and consistently for every school session. All attendance codes must be used accurately – improper use of codes can mask attendance and potential safeguarding issues while also potentially impeding prosecutions.

At Cwmffrwdor Primary we use an electronic register within SIMs. Each staff member has their own log on and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure the register is marked. If they delegate the task to a Teaching Assistant, they still remain accountable for the register. The register must be complete at the start of every session.

Completing the electronic register

Teachers must:

- Complete the register immediately at the start of each session.
- Not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when they call the register
- Not leave any spaces in the register
- Make any changes to the register clearly, **distinguishing between the original entry and the correction**. Both the original entry and any correction **must be preserved by ensuring the register is saved within SIMS.**
- Not allow pupils to mark the register
- Mark pupils who are present / (*am*) and \ (*pm*)

- Mark pupils who are absent **O** if in school's view no satisfactory explanation is provided.
- Mark pupils who arrive late but before the register is closed **L**
- Mark pupils who arrive after the register is closed **U** (see Section 3 for more information).

You should display instructions for filling in the register near to the laptop being used to register the pupils, usually next to the interactive whiteboard. Use the codes within this document – **not those within SIMS as they are not the WG approved codes!**

Section 3: Authorised and unauthorised absence

This section covers the different types of absence. The Education Welfare Service (EWS) can provide further advice.

Authorised absence

Only the school can authorise an absence. **You should not automatically class an absence as authorised because it is covered by a note from the parent. All notes once dealt with by the teacher should be filed and sent to the school office for safe keeping.**

(CODE CATEGORISATION ADVICE FOR THE NEW STATUTORY CODES)

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING	PHYSICAL MEANING
∧	Present at registration 9-9.10 am PM – 1.05-1.15pm	Present	This code should be used for pupils who were present in school during registration
L	Late but arrived before the register closed 9.30 am	Present	This code should be used for pupils that arrive late but before registration has closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival.
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	Approved educational activity	This code should be used where a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off-site at a

			supervised activity approved by the school. Examples such as attending taster day at other school, pupils attending alternative provision arranged and or agreed by the school, pupils undertaking work experience as part of an alternative curriculum. Schools should not use this code if a pupil has an agreed part-time timetable as part of reintegration or transition. These pupils should be marked as code C for those sessions.
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)	Approved educational activity	The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school and they are not required to attend your school. The school where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and chasing up non-attendance.
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity	This code should be used when a pupil is participating in or attending an approved sporting activity.
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity	This code should be used for school organised trips or visits, including residential trips. Can also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by other organisations, provided they are supervised.
J	Interview	Approved educational activity	This code should be used for pupils undertaking interviews with prospective employers, or another educational establishment.

W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved educational activity	This code should be used for work experience under section 560 of the Education
----------	---	-------------------------------	---

			Act 1996. Work experience undertaken as part of an alternative curriculum should not be recorded using this code.
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code / description)	Authorised absence	<p>This code should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Schools should consider the nature of the event, its frequency and the overall attendance pattern of the pupil.</p> <p>Examples might include special occasions such as weddings, family bereavement, young carer, maternity leave, public performance.</p>
F	Agreed extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	<p>Parents are not entitled to withdraw pupils for holidays during term time.</p> <p>School should only agree to absence for family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. School can only agree to absence of more than 10 days in a school year in exceptional circumstances.</p>
H	Agreed family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	<p>Parents are not entitled to withdraw pupils for holidays during term time.</p> <p>School should only agree to absence for family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. School can only agree to absence of more than 10 days in a school year in exceptional circumstances.</p>
I	Illness	Authorised absence	<p>This code should be used when a child is absent for a whole session due to illness, medical or treatment.</p> <p>If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can record</p>

			the absence as unauthorised absence (code O) but should advise parents of the school's intention. Schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support absence on the ground of illness.
M	Medical or dental appointments	Authorised absence	For health and safety reasons a system must be in place to record that pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during a session for medical (GP), hospital or dental appointments
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence	A pupil who is excluded for a fixed period remains on the school roll but cannot attend the school. A pupil who is permanently excluded remains on roll until the appeal process has been completed.
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence	Absence to take part in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Traveller child when the family is travelling. If the pupil's family are known to be travelling but it is not known whether the pupil is attending education provision, the absence should be authorised and recorded using this code. A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling.

The main changes in the new codes and the associated WAG guidance are:

- A new 5th statistical category of 'not required to attend' to be used for a small number of specific infrequent circumstances. This category will

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

cover absence due to the partial closure of a school e.g. where some of the pupils cannot attend due to bad weather. They would no longer be recorded as an authorised absence.

- Where Traveller children are registered at more than one school and are present at one of those schools, the other school (s) at which they are registered can record them as receiving approved educational activity. They would no longer be recorded as an authorised absence.
- A young offender may now only be deleted from the register where his or her period of custody is for at least four months and where the school has reasonable grounds for believing that the pupil will not be returning to school at the end of that period. He or she will be recorded as an authorised absence until his or her name is deleted from the register. If an alternative approved educational activity is provided during the period of custody, the school may record the pupil as receiving approved educational activity. Previously, a pupil's name could be deleted from the register if he or she had been absent for 4 weeks and had been detained by court order.

Unauthorised absences (truancy)

N	No reason for the absence provided yet	Unauthorised absence	This code should be used when a pupil is absent from school and no reason has yet been provided for this absence. If no explanation is forthcoming after a reasonable amount of time the N code to be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised circumstances	Unauthorised absence	This code is used for all absences that the school considers to be unauthorised. A parent /carer may offer an explanation to the school. Examples such as shopping, 'couldn't get up', having hair cut, transfer to another school.
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence	Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking into account the age of the child, the overall attendance of the child, the child's stage of

			education and progress, its nature and parental wishes. Schools should invite parents in to school to discuss any proposed holiday in term time.
U	Late and arrived after the register closed after 9.30 am	Unauthorised absence	Schools should (a) actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival and (b) have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. The WAG advises that schools should close the register to pupils 30 minutes after the start of the session.

Unauthorised absences can be defined as absence from school for any period as a result of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence.

Parentally condoned absences include absences when:

- a parent is ill
- a parent is using the child as a child-minder
- a pupil is supporting other members of the family
- work patterns, for example shift work, make it difficult for the family to ensure the child can attend school
- a parent wants company
- a parent gives in to the pupil who wants to stay at home
- it is the pupil's birthday
- a parent does not care whether the pupil attends school
- a parent has taken the pupil shopping
- a parent cannot control the pupil
- a parent has taken the pupil to the hairdresser
- a pupil is in paid work
- a parent is hostile towards the school or towards education in general
- a parent distrusts authority
- a parent is using the pupil as an interpreter

6

Not required to attend codes

X	Non-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not required to attend	This code should be used for pupils who have not attained the age of 5 years at the start of the term in which the session takes place or were 16 years before the start of the school year in which it takes place. Under the new regulations, schools cannot delete Year 11 pupils who intend to remain at the school and enter sixth form from the school registers.
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend	This code should be used where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable causes such as no water or heating or flooding or the transport provided by the school or LA for pupils is not available.
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend	This code should be used for administration purposed for pupils expected to join the school roll. Under new regulations, schools must now put pupils on the admissions register on the first day that the school expects them to attend not, as previously, when they first attend. Schools should also remember that all pupils on the admissions register must also be entered on the attendance register and their attendance recorded.
#		Not required to attend	This code should be used for planned closures for the whole school.

Lateness

You must set a point at which you close the class register. The Welsh Assembly Government and Torfaen recommend this is set at **30 minutes after the start of school**. Cwmffrwdor Primary adopt this recommendation.

If any child arrives after this point, you must count it as an unauthorised absence.

If a child is frequently late, the parent may be failing to ensure that the child is receiving full-time education. We may prosecute the parent under the Education Act 1996, section 444.

Vulnerable groups

Travellers

Use the code T only when the child's family is travelling.

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller - Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (Fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

To help ensure continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling if it is the base school. If the pupil's family are known to be travelling but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision (at a school or other provider), the absence should be authorised and recorded using code T.

If the pupil is known to be dual registered and present at another school during the session in question, the attendance should be recorded using code D. If the pupil is known to be present (during the session in question) at other educational activity which meet the requirements of the regulation on approved educational activity, the attendance should be marked using codes B, J, P, V or W as appropriate.

If the pupil is known to be absent from other provision for reasons other than travelling (e.g. illness, unexplained absence) the appropriate code should be

used. Children from “traveller” families are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of requirements to attend school. However, there is a defence available to traveller families if prosecuted for non attendance provided that the child has attended a school for at least 200 sessions in the 12 months ending when legal proceedings are started.

Looked After Children:

Each school has a designated teacher for children in public care. At Cwmffrwdoer Primary this is the Headteacher. The LA intervenes where the student has 10 days (20 sessions) absence in one academic year. Schools may wish to intervene well before this point. The LA will monitor all LAC’s attendance.

Children on the child protection register:

The Headteacher and Education Welfare Service will review each child’s attendance that attends Cwmffrwdoer Primary School and recommend appropriate action. The Headteacher (and where the EWS has involvement they) will attend Child Protection Case Conferences and contribute to the core group and care plan where necessary.

Children and young people with medical needs:

Children and young people who are absent from school because of physical or mental health issues need to be reviewed regularly and sensitively. They are entitled to educational provision and the school and EWS can give advice on dealing with medical absence as can the school nurse.

Missing children

Where pupils do not return to school and neither the school nor the EWS have been able to trace the whereabouts of the pupil, and no requests for the school file have been received, the pupil should be treated as a “missing child”. The school must notify the EWO and School Admissions who will place the pupil’s name on the national missing children database. This would also involve contact with and a referral made to Torfaen Social Care and Housing department.

Changes of address

If you suspect that a pupil's family has moved away from the area without giving you its new address, you must tell the EWS. The school and the EWS must make a reasonable attempt to find out where the pupil has gone. If you are unable to find out where the pupil has gone, you must take the pupil off the school roll after four weeks. You can then record the time since the pupil last attended school as authorised absence.

Pupils who are employed

The Local Authority will issue an employment license to the child if it is satisfied if the proposed employment is lawful, that the child's health, welfare or ability to take full advantage of their education would not be jeopardised and that the child is fit to undertake the work for which he or she is to be employed.

The Children (Performance) Regulations 1968 & Children & Young Persons Act 1963 covers licensing for children employed in entertainment and the licensing of **Matrons/Chaperones**. Any child from birth until they cease to be of compulsory school age who is employed in entertainment including modelling, filming, television work, sports or music, for example must be licensed to do so. The law states what hours children may work and when they may do this. The production company should apply for the licence for the child to perform at least 21 days in advance. Those wishing to become matrons or chaperones require a CRB check, references, passport photos, proof of identification and address and will need to complete an application form.

For more information please contact Vicki Cambridge, Senior Educational Welfare Officer on 01633 647373.

Pupils attending alternative education provision arranged by the school

Where a child remains on the roll of a school, that school must ensure the pupil's attendance and take appropriate steps where this attendance is unacceptable. There is no specific legislation covering the duty of a provider of alternative education to contact a school in the event of a pupil failing to attend. However, providers have a common law duty of care to play their part in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of a pupil. It is good practice to set up a partnership agreement with the provider to ensure effective communication of attendance

and welfare issues prior to using that provider. However, the primary duty to follow up attendance and welfare issues remains with the school.

Family holidays and extended holidays during term time

The Headteacher will not be able to authorise absences for family holidays during term time, based on advice by the Local Authority. Parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised.

Where a parent requests permission to take their child on holiday during school term and their child's attendance is below 90% over the last two terms, this request should be declined in all cases (unless there is clear medical evidence to support the child's absences).

If the parent takes their child, regardless of permission not being granted, then the pupil's attendance will be recorded as unauthorised.

- **NB** attendance below 90% in this case refers to total attendance rates inclusive of both authorised and unauthorised attendance rates.

Where a parent requests permission to take their child on holiday during school term in all other cases the Headteacher should use their judgement as to whether permission is granted. However to ensure consistency it is highly unlikely that any holidays will be authorised, unless the pupil is under the statutory school age. Where it is not granted and a parent still withdraws their child then these absences should also be recorded as unauthorised.

You should not allow an absence of more than 10 school days for a family holiday unless the situation is exceptional. The LA advises not to approve requests for holidays where the pupil's attendance is below 90%.

Appendix 1 - a model Family Holiday Application form. Appendix 2 – Model Notes on Application for a Family Holiday.

Section 4: Recording, monitoring and setting targets

Recording attendance

Recording information about attendance accurately and effectively as a school will allow us to:

report to parents; report to governors; provide the LA with the information it needs to monitor your performance; provide the information required by WG; find out how you can improve attendance; set targets for individual pupils, teaching groups, year groups and the school as a whole.

Monitoring attendance

To allow us as a school to monitor attendance effectively, we will:

- Use first response system and absent text messages
- use the same registration procedures throughout your school
- use the codes prescribed by WAG
- keep track of pupils during the day, ensure that all classes have clearly visible the number of pupils present and on roll at start of each session.
- have a system, possibly spot checks, to tackle truancy after registration
- identify a SLT member to carry out this role : the Headteacher
- provide clear information to the EWS so that it can detect patterns of absence quickly and intervene early

Setting targets

As a school we set targets for improving attendance every year and for the forthcoming two years. Our current attendance targets are as follows.

The Education (School Performance and Unauthorised Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 require the governing bodies of every maintained school (other than a special school established in a hospital) to set targets no later than the 31 December in every school year, and must submit to the local education authority. These targets refer to the level to which the absence rate of the pupils at the school is to be reduced.

Where a governing body has previously set absence targets under these regulations the following will apply:

- A final target for the following school year, being the reviewed target set in the previous school year but revised if the governing body deem it necessary to do so.
- A reviewed target for the school year next but one, being the provisional target set in the previous school year but revised if the governing body deem it necessary to do so.
- A provisional target for the school year next but two.

Where the LA is not satisfied with any target submitted by a governing body as stated above, it must give notice to the governing body of that fact, and the governing body must submit a revised target within 21 days of receipt of such a notice.

Where the LA is not satisfied with the revised target submitted by the governing body it must set the target.

A final absence target set by a governing body must not be modified by the governing body without the agreement of the LA.

First Day Response (FDR) at Cwmffrwdroer Primary School

Parents are politely reminded it is their responsibility to contact the school on the first day of an absence. If parents do not contact the school, or if they give an unacceptable reason for the absence, the school will follow up absences in a fair way that is clear to all teachers, pupils and parents through the FDR.

First Day Response is both critical for ensuring effective attendance; it also helps ensure that children are kept safe and that the school has discharged its duty of care. It is part of the school-wide attendance policy.

Most absences are short. Schools can greatly reduce these absences by following up all absences quickly. Research suggests that pupils are less likely to take time off for trivial reasons if they know the school will notice their absence and follow it up swiftly. Schools that contact pupils' homes on the first day of absence have cut short-term absences. This has led to lower rates of absence overall.

First Day Response (FDR) principles at Cwmffrwdoer Primary School

- Parents are told about the FDR during induction to the school, in the prospectus and in newsletters. We believe parents need to know what the school procedures are to eliminate any confusion. We aim to promote the positive principles for FDR within the community by publicising it is: Safer for all; all staff should be vigilant – attendance is both an issue about raising attainment and a significant safeguarding issue. It is not something to “trap” parents with. Parents are our partners. If we are to be successful we need to be supportive. However FDR is not to be used as an alternative for parents in ringing the school, nor should it be used as an alarm clock. FDR is not to be used as a means to authorise absences; FDR is about challenging explanations and not authorising where there is doubt.

Implementing First Day Response at Cwmffrwdoer Primary School

Procedures and guideline for staff supporting and implementing FDR

- Registration begins at 9am and lasts for approx. 10 mins. Registers close at 9.30 and any pupils arriving after 9.10 should be recorded as either late before closure of the register, or late after registration closes 9.30.
- Lateness procedures – all children who arrive late enter the school via the main door to be signed in the Late Book.
- There is a robust recording and reporting processes for First Day Response actions in school – this evidence might be needed for potential legal action. This will be done using the reporting function within SIMS.
- FDR staff should complete reasons for absence or no response within the child’s SIMS record.
- Should any concerns arise from FDR this information must to be passed onto the designated person(s) - Headteacher or Deputy Head. All records will form part of the attendance data recorded within SIMS.
- If significantly (approx. 1/3 of class) large numbers of children are absent from a class the Headteacher should be informed. For example, a widespread sickness bug, in case advice needs to be sought from the LA Health & Safety department.
- Identified staff must carry out 1st day CONTACT – an unanswered phone call should be followed up by a text message, email or a standard letter - requesting they contact school to inform us of a child’s whereabouts/ reason for absence.

- All pupils need to be followed up, with particular focus on vulnerable groups, such as those on the child protection register, or those who are LAC. The sooner the contact is made the more effective its impact in most cases. Office staff and teaching staff should identify those pupils on their absence sheet with a code of V – and check SIMS and the school's vulnerable pupils' list held by the HT, for details.
- Where there is no contact with a vulnerable child, the school should always send a text or letter home that day. **If there has been no contact before the end of the second school day the EWO should be informed and asked to visit the household.**
- The reason the parent gives for the absence should be recorded. However it is for the school to decide whether or not the absence is authorised and the following guidance should be referred to in all cases:
 - If a pupil has had more than 10 days off in any term due to medical reasons, the parent must attend a meeting in school to discuss their child's absence or provide a letter from a medical professional that offers some explanation. This could be a letter from the child's consultant paediatrician for example. Where there has been more than 10 days absence in a term and no evidence is available from the parent then the child's absences should be recorded as an unauthorised absence. School should also bring this child to the EWO's attention.
 - Where a parent requests permission to take their child on holiday during school term and their child's attendance is below 90% over the last two terms, this request should be declined in all cases (unless there is clear medical evidence to support the child's absences). If the parent takes their child, regardless of permission not being granted, then the pupil's attendance will be recorded as unauthorised.
 - **NB** attendance below 90% in this case refers to total attendance rates inclusive of both authorised and unauthorised attendance rates.
 - Where a parent requests permission to take their child on holiday during school term in all other cases the Headteacher should use their judgement as to whether permission is granted. Where it is not granted and a parent still withdraws their child then these absences should also be recorded as unauthorised.
- By ensuring first day response happens, schools are letting the parents and child know the school cares and the child will be missed.

Advice for staff implementing FDR in the event of abusive or threatening behaviour from parents and carers

- Staff should be encouraged to follow the guidance when carrying out their duties: communicate positively and clearly with a welcome greeting and a sensitive response; 'Assist and insist' - be happy to challenge; 'Firm but fair' response for consistent offenders who do not follow up with reasons for absence;

Threatening or Aggressive responses to FDR

- Remain calm, never respond in the same way; explain the nature of the call if you can, ask politely for reason of absence: if the caller is escalating behaviour such as shouting and swearing, politely thank them for their time and end the call.
- Immediately record nature of the call in writing and report it directly to the Headteacher.

Incentives for good attendance at Cwmffrwdoer Primary School

We believe pupils should be rewarded for good attendance. We have the following incentives for good attendance.

- Fair procedures that are followed by all staff
- Consultation with pupils about the form of rewards
- Short-term targets that are easy to achieve
- A method for pupils to monitor their own attendance at KS 2
- A clear understanding among pupils and parents of the attendance needed to achieve a reward
- A clear timetable for presenting rewards, for example each month, or each half or full term
- Recognition of improved attendance
- Presentation of certificates or awards in assembly
- The appointment of a member of staff with responsibility for ensuring that awards and certificates are available.

Benefits and incentives for individual pupils

The benefits can be that:

- Pupils know that the school recognises and appreciates their efforts

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

- The school communicates better with parents
- Pupils of all abilities can gain awards
- Pupils have personal targets.

Rewards offered for good attendance include:

Rewards	Period of time	Reward
Good news assembly reward for best class attendance for the previous week.	Weekly	Attendance Trophy Squash and biscuits for classes with the highest attendance
100 %	Termly	Certificates and prizes
100% & 99% Attendance individuals	End of year	Certificates and gift or prizes

Supporting pupils when they return from absence

Supporting a pupil after a long period of absence requires careful planning. The school, the parents and the EWO may have spent much time persuading the pupil to return. Returning to school may also have required courage on the part of the pupil.

Procedures for dealing with pupils who return after an absence not only help the pupil but also reduce disruption for other pupils. Sensitivity is vital, as well-intentioned jokes can undo good work.

Steps to success

We will:

- Appoint a named person to co-ordinate support for the pupil. This will be either the class teacher or teaching assistant.
- Set the return date in advance and alerting all staff, particularly the class teacher and teaching assistants within the child's class.
- Consider a special timetable or a phased return with learning support.
- Ensure that staff can provide work or details of work to be done.

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

Section 6: Liaison between the Partner Primary Schools and Abersychan School

As a cluster of schools we are committed to improving the attendance of all our pupils to ensure that they attain the maximum benefit from their education. Together we have developed systems which will support us in our drive to raise standards.

In the Primary schools an attendance focus will take place with year 5 and 6 pupils each half term.

Punctuality

Every month a letter should be sent to parents/carers highlighting the number of times that their child has been late to school (see appendix).

Attendance Panels

Each half term an attendance panel should be held in each school. The aim is to provide a structure and staged approach (see table below) to managing pupils' attendance. The panel also provides a format in which to offer parents/carers and/or pupils the best advice, help and support available in order to help their children attend school regularly.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The school may use fixed penalty notices (FPNs), in accordance with the regional fixed penalty guidance. (see appendix 4)

Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence during the current academic year. These do not need to be consecutive;
- Unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays in term time or delayed return from extended holidays; or
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed, in the current term. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of late arrival;
- Truancy, where the child has come to the attention of the Police or public during school hours for being absent from school, without an acceptable reason.

Section 6: The Education Welfare Service

The main role of the Council's EWS is to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. The EWS does so in partnership with school and parents.

The EWS can help you if you cannot find out why a pupil is absent, or if you cannot ensure that a pupil attends regularly. An educational welfare officer (EWO) can contact the child's family and can offer advice if a child is absent without good reason.

Initially, schools are responsible for identifying and dealing with absence. You must tell the EWS if a pupil is frequently absent (for example for more than one day a week) or if a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row.

It is important to work in partnership with the EWS. School staff and the EWO should understand each other's roles and responsibilities. Staff, such as year heads, should set aside time to meet the EWO.

As well as advising staff on individual cases, the EWO may:

- Help to explain the importance of attendance to staff, pupils, parents and governors
- Take part in joint initiatives with the school, including personal and social education, group work with poor attenders and liaison between primary and secondary schools.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service

All schools should follow the same procedures for involving the EWS. This section explains:

- When you should involve the EWS
- How the EWS deals with persistent absence.

Stage 1: referral to the Education Welfare Service

Before making a referral to the EWS, you must try to contact the parent to resolve the problem.

Typically these actions might be:

- Unexplained absence should be followed up by the school using the system they have in place for 'first day response'.

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

- Where the pupil's home cannot be contacted by telephone, after 3 days of unexplained absence a letter should be sent requesting an explanation.
- If the first letter elicits no response from the parents/carers, further contact should be made within a further 3 days, either by telephone, letter or home visit.
- Where specific problems are encountered (e.g. language), the school should consider involving appropriate services to assist.
- At this stage, the appropriate in-school person should address the attendance pattern of the pupil. Plans for dealing with the problem should be devised with the involvement of parents/carers and any support agencies available to the school.
- When successful contact has been made it is often possible to agree strategies which resolve the attendance pattern without recourse to the EWS. Parents/carers should be encouraged to be involved actively in dealing with attendance problems. They should be kept informed about the use of report systems, curriculum or timetable changes, pastoral counselling, and assessment of learning difficulties or other interventions.
- Referral to the EWS should be considered if a pupil's attendance has not significantly increased, despite school's endeavours as outlined above, i.e. is above 85% in secondary and 90% in primary.

You must make the referral on form EWS1 (see Appendix 3). You must attach records of your telephone contacts, letters to home and meeting minutes for the referral to be accepted.

Stage 2: Action Plan

On receiving a referral, an EWO will try to contact the pupil's parents within five working days. On contacting the parents, the EWO will normally arrange a meeting with the family and school staff in school, the purpose of which is to draw up an action plan to target improvements in attendance. The EWO will try to agree the action plan with the family, the school and any other agencies involved and the plan will set out the roles and responsibilities of each. The EWS will produce the action plan within five working days of the meeting and

will send a copy to the school, family and any other agencies involved as soon as possible.

The EWS records information about all referrals for non-attendance, including the pupil's attendance for the most recent 100 half days. This enables the Senior EWO to monitor the effectiveness of the service by comparing attendance before and after the EWS became involved. This information is also important should the LA be forced into considering taking legal action against the family due to non-engagement / continued non-attendance.

Stage 3: Internal Review of Attendance/First Warning

Once the meeting has taken place the EWO will monitor the pupil's attendance for the next 6 school weeks.

If the pupil's attendance has improved over this period (i.e. is now at 90% in secondary schools or 92% in primary schools), then the EWO will pass the monitoring of that pupil's attendance back to school.

If, at the end of the six week monitoring period since the plan was agreed with parent/carer, a pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence², the EWO will automatically send a warning letter to the parent/carer giving a warning that legal action may be taken against them unless there is a significant and immediate improvement in their child's attendance.

The legal action that the EWS will consider will include:

- Applying for an education supervision order (the Children Act 1989, section 36)
- Prosecuting the parents (the Education act 1996, section 444).

The EWO will call a review meeting with the parents and school staff to happen four weeks later i.e. giving the pupil and parent/carer a further four weeks in which to work with school and the EWO to achieve improvement in attendance.

Stage 4: Second Warning

Cwmffrwdor Attendance Policy

² Any medical absences during this period should be carefully considered by school before they are authorised – your EWO should be updated on the reasons and evidence given when schools authorise these medical absences.

The meeting described above will happen unless there has been improvement in the pupil's attendance. If there is no improvement, a second warning will be issued to the parent/ carer.

The EWO will also send a standard letter to both Social Care and the Educational Psychology Service asking them if they are involved and whether or not they are aware of any reasons why a prosecution should not be instigated.

At the review meeting, the plan will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary, and a new review date set for four weeks later. The EWO will clarify for the meeting that, if a significant improvement in attendance is not seen over this period, then the Final Warning Notice will be issued.

Stage 5: Final Warning

This planning meeting will normally involve the pupil, the pupil's family, the school and any other agencies involved. The meeting normally takes place at the pupil's school but it will be arranged and chaired by the EWO and, in some cases, the Senior EWO. At the meeting, the EWS will consider the case, consult social services about applying for an education supervision order, and decide whether to take legal action.

Stage 6: Prosecution

If the pupil takes fewer than 10 half days of unauthorised absence in the 100 half days after the final warning, the EWS may close the case. The school can refer the case back to the EWS at any time.

If the pupil takes 10 or more half days of unauthorised absence, the EWS will prepare the papers for a prosecution immediately. If a Parenting Order is recommended or given by the court the EWS will inform Social Services.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governors: are responsible for ratification of policy, setting targets and developing patterns of good attendance as a school.

Headteacher: is responsible for developing the policy based on LA guidance and will monitor and review its implementation.

Teachers: are responsible for implementing the policy.

Pupils: to attend school regularly, on time and tell school if there are barriers to developing excellent attendance patterns.

Parents: to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually. Support the school policy for attendance; inform the school about absence of their child. Ensure they keep contact details up to date with school so we are able to contact them about pupil absence. Try to avoid taking their child out of school for holidays.

Equal Opportunities: see strategic equality plan.

Health and Safety: See policy. However, relevant safeguarding issues are also covered within the Child Protection policy.

Monitoring and evaluation: The policy will be monitored and evaluated by the HT, Staff member in school office and EWS.

Governor approval date: 4th October 23

review date: 04/10/2024

Author:

Other documents and appendices:

See LA guidance on achieving high attendance.

Flowchart: a framework for managing attendance referrals and persistent non- attendance

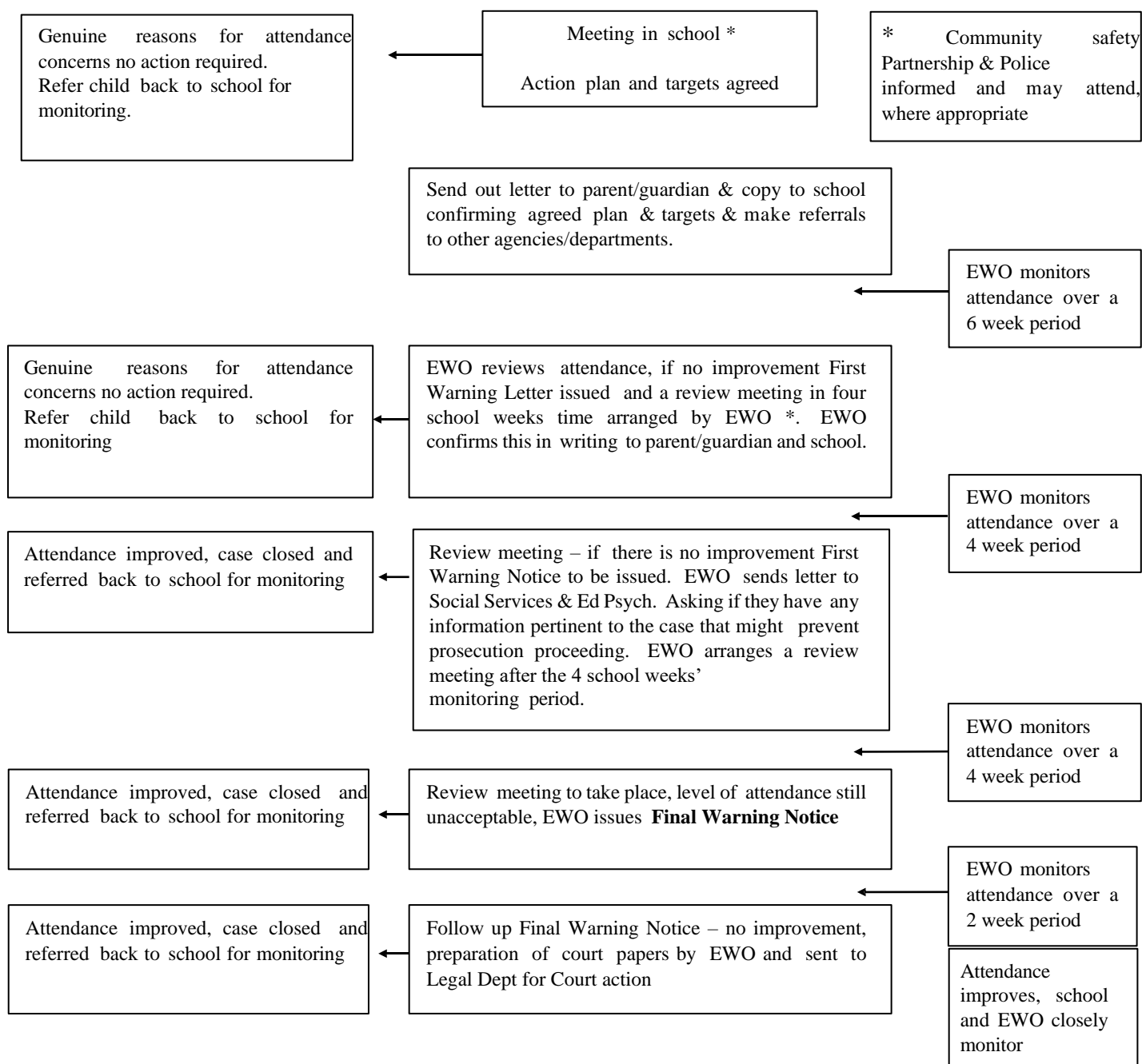
SCHOOL LEVEL ACTION

Identify children with attendance that gives cause for concern, then:

1. First day contact
2. Letter to parent/guardian
3. Meeting in school
4. Telephone conversation
5. Action plan and targets agreed with parents to improve child's attendance

REFERRAL TO EWS

EWO contacts parents via letter, telephone call, home visit to arrange a meeting in school



Recording and Monitoring Cases

The EWS will keep a record of each pupil who is referred for poor attendance. The record will include:

- The pupil's personal details
- The pupil's year group
- The date of the referral
- The stage that the case has reached
- The number of unauthorised absences

The Headteacher can ask to see this information on a monthly basis.

If the case is active, the EWO will monitor attendance at least once every fortnight.

Referring a case back to the Education Welfare Service

If a school has to refer a closed case back to the EWS within 100 half days, the EWS will return to the stage at which the case was closed.

Termly register checks

At least once each term the EWO must check the registers and give the Senior EWO details of any pupils who have taken 20 or more unauthorised absences in any 10-week period.

Prosecution of parents of Year 11 pupils

The LA can take legal action against the parents of any child of compulsory school age who is not attending school regularly. But it does not have to take legal action.

If the attendance of a Year 11 pupil has not improved after a final warning, the EWS will look at the individual situation, taking advice from the school and the Council's Legal Department.

If a Year 11 pupil has less than one and a half terms of school left, the EWS is unlikely to start a prosecution.

Appendix 1: Model family holiday application form

Request for a child to go on a family holiday during term time

(Please read the notes on the back of this form before you fill it in.)

Section A

Child's name:

Class or tutor group:

First day of absence from school:

Last day of absence from school:

Total number of days absent:

Is this your only family holiday this year? Yes / No

Why are you planning your holiday during term time? Please include any information you would like us to consider.

Section B – please fill in this section if it is difficult for you to take time off work during the school holidays. Otherwise, go to Section C.

Name of parent or carer whose job is affected when you go on holiday:

Name and address of employer:

Job title:

Please explain why it is difficult for you to take time off work during school holidays or attach your conditions of employment.

Section C

I have read the attached notes. The information I have given on this form is correct:

Signature of parent/ carer:

Date:

Section D – for school use only
Request approved/not approved:

Date:

Headteacher's signature:

Date:

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

Appendix 2: Model notes on application for a family holiday

Notes on family holidays

Planning your holiday

We publish the dates of school terms well ahead. This is to help you plan your holidays. When you book your holiday, please check that it does not clash with the school term.

The value of regular attendance

Your child must attend school regularly, especially to gain qualifications for their future employment. Research shows that pupils perform better if their parents or carers emphasise the importance of attending school.

Your legal responsibilities

You have a legal duty to make sure your child attends school regularly and punctually. The school and the Local Authority monitor your child's attendance and will take action if it is poor.

Absence for a family holiday

The Government recommends that family holidays are taken outside school terms. Headteachers will sometimes give permission for a pupil to go on holiday during term time. The Headteacher will consider the reasons for the holiday, the pupil's past attendance, and the effects the absence will have on the pupil's learning. The Headteacher will not normally give permission simply because holidays cost less during term time.

The Headteacher will not normally give permission for more than 10 days' absence for a family holiday in any school year. Only in exceptional situations will the Headteacher give permission for a longer absence.

Applying for absence because of a family holiday

If you have to take your family holiday during school term, please fill in the form over the page. Please do not assume that you will automatically get permission for the absence because you have filled in the form. Please wait to hear if the Headteacher agrees to your request.

Warning

If you take your child out of school without permission you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may decide to prosecute. A conviction may result in a fine of up to £2,500, a prison sentence of up to three months or both.

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

Appendix 3: Form EWS1

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE
Request for Intervention for those Pupils whose Attendance is
Under 80% (Secondary) or 90% (Primary)

Name of pupil:	M/F:	DOB:	Year Group:	
Full name of parent / carer:		School:		
Address:		Home No:	Tel	Work Tel No:
Others with Parental Responsibility:				
Other agencies involved (Details attached):				
Is pupil 'looked after' by Local Authority (LAC): (please ✓)		Yes		No
Is pupil a 'young carer' (YC): (please insert ✓)	Not known	Yes		No
SEN Code of Stage / Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN): (please insert ✓)	Yes	NO	SA	SA+
Current Attendance Rate	Authorised:		Unauthorised:	
Registration Certificate Attached (please insert ✓)				
ACTION TAKEN BY SCHOOL				
First Day Response	Date	Response / Outcome		
Letters to parent / guardian (copies attached)				
School Meetings (copies attached)				
Please confirm that the parents / guardians have been informed of this referral to the EWS: (please ✓)				
Are there any issues regarding worker safety that should be taken into account in planning a response?				
Reason for Referral and Any Other Relevant Information:				
Referred By:	Title:		Date:	

Appendix 4: Model Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) Letter to Parent

Name of pupil:

Date of birth:

Date:

Dear parent/carers

I have reviewed your child's attendance record and am concerned to note that he/she has incurred at least 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in the last 50 sessions (25 school days).

I enclose a copy of your child's attendance record and remind you that as a parent/carers of a child who is a registered pupil at this school, you have the legal responsibility for ensuring your child attends regularly.

All schools share the Welsh Government's determination to raise levels of pupil attendance and achievement in order to ensure the best possible start in life for our children.

Under the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice for each of their children, who fail to attend school regularly. A Fixed Penalty Notice is an early deterrent intended to prevent more extended periods of unauthorised absence developing and incur a fine of £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice may result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

I can therefore advise you that the school will be closely monitoring your child's attendance from the date of this letter and should any further unauthorised absence occur, consideration will be given to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Support and guidance regarding attendance is available from school or the Local Authority, however should you have any specific queries in relation to this letter, please contact me on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely,

Torfaen Draft Protocol for Schools with lower than expected rates of Attendance

“...the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of KS2. In particular, pupils with no absence are 1.6 times more likely to achieve level 4 or above, and 4.7 times more likely to achieve level 5 or above, than pupils that missed 15-20 per cent of all sessions.

...pupils with no absence are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils missing 15-20 per cent of KS4 lessons.”

The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4
Department for Education, 2015

Health and Safety: See policy. However, relevant safeguarding issues are also covered within the Child Protection policy.

Monitoring and evaluation: The policy will be monitored and evaluated by the HT, Staff member in school office and EWS.

Governor approval date: /10/18

Next review date:

Other documents and appendices:

See LA guidance on achieving high attendance.

Equal Opportunities

Garnteg Primary School is committed to equality, including racial equality, for all members of the school community. The school promotes a positive and proactive approach to valuing and respecting diversity, and will not tolerate racial harassment of any kind.

Ratified by the Governing body on:

Chair: Mrs N Davies

Policy Review Date: November 2022

This policy was updated and taken to the Governing Body on again February 2023

Context and Rationale

There is a clear link between poor attendance and low educational attainment. It is recognised that schools can experience ‘chapters’ when attendance is lower than it ‘should’ be. Ongoing periods of lower than expected attendance are unacceptable and directly affect the collective performance of a school and individual pupil attainment.

Local authorities have statutory responsibility for monitoring and intervening where there are concerns about school standards. However local authorities should monitor schools’ progress systematically, identifying at an early stage schools where there may be challenges and act quickly to prevent these from escalating by providing effective targeted support to improve any shortcomings. Examples of this includes the Local Authority working with schools to review attendance processes within the school; co-devising attendance action plans and supporting their delivery.

Providing effective support and challenge around attendance therefore plays a key role in addressing low performance, raising standards and improving the quality of education. It is important that regional consortia and local authorities, working in partnership with schools put in place effective mechanisms for attendance monitoring.

Standard Practice for All Schools

Target Setting

From the academic year 2016/17 the Local Authority has introduced a new process of agreeing attendance targets with schools. This aligns with processes taking place in other Local Authorities within the South East Wales Consortium.

Each year, at the start of the Autumn term, individual school attendance targets will be suggested by the Local Authority and the head teacher and Governors required to state whether the target is accepted or not. If the suggested target is not accepted, in addition to informing the Local Authority the reason by email, the school Challenge Advisor will seek a clear explanation of why a different target has been set. Where possible the Head of Pupil Support, the Senior EWO or a nominated representative, will attend the target setting meeting with the school and EAS when the school does not accept the suggested target.

The basis of the suggested targets is that:

- Targets must not be less than attendance data for the previous two academic years

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

- Targets should demonstrate an increase each year, except for those schools performing at the top end of Quartile 1 in their benchmarking group. These schools should set a target that sustains performance and strive to increase their place within their family of schools
- Schools currently performing below quartile 1 should aim to move up a quartile group, or make substantial progress towards a quartile boundary, based on previous year quartile boundaries

Support and Challenge for Ongoing Periods of Lower than Expected Attendance

This process will be applied when a combination of the following are identified:

- Significant areas of concern are noted in the school attendance self-evaluation
- Attendance targets agreed with the local authority are not met;
- There is an established trend of a school being placed below the median benchmarking position;
- Key principles of monitoring and addressing poor attendance are not applied systematically within a school.

The protocol requires action involving all partners at school, local authority and EAS level, and should ensure that there is a clear understanding of the underlying causes of poor attendance. The implementation of the protocol will ensure that appropriate and effective remedial action is taken so that the circumstance does not continue.

Step 1: Informal Meeting between Senior School and Local Authority Staff Hosted by the School

The local authority will explore their initial concerns with an individual school via an ‘Attendance Meeting’, hosted by the school. This meeting will be attended by the Head Teacher, School Attendance Lead, Head of Pupil Support and Senior Education Welfare Officer. This meeting will consider the school’s position, the current context and look at delivering the improvement via a **School Attendance Action Plan**. The Senior EWO will fully brief the EWO and will monitor the position going forward.

Step 2: Attendance Summit Hosted by the Local Authority

If, following step 1, the school attendance data does not improve or significant concerns are still held by the Head of Education Services regarding attendance practices, the school will be invited to an Attendance Summit.

Those present at the meeting should include; a Senior Local Authority Leadership; the Cabinet Member for Education and Young People; the Head Teacher (and any school senior leaders who have a key role in managing attendance); the Chair of Governors and the Principal Challenge Advisor / Challenge Advisor.

During the summit, the school will present their historical and current year data and a forensic exploration of the systems used to manage attendance. Additionally, the school will share its plans for addressing the issues identified.

Where a school is already involved in an Education Improvement Board (EIB) or formal Intervention Plan Monitoring meeting, the local authority will aim to create a single meeting which focusses on all issues relating to performance. If the school is not involved in an EIB, and concerns remain following the summit, the school will enter an EIB specifically for attendance.

The local authority will determine if ‘limited, satisfactory, very good or strong’ progress has been made by a school after each EIB meeting has taken place.

Step 3: Issuing of a Statutory Warning Notice

Following an attendance summit, where the LA deems it appropriate, in line with the Schools Causing Concern guidance document 202/2016, a statutory Warning Notice may be issued to the school under one or more of the following grounds:

- **Ground 1:** The standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low.
- **Ground 2:** There has been a breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed.
- **Ground 3:** The behaviour of pupils at the school or any action taken by those pupils or their parents is severely prejudicing, or is likely to severely prejudice, the education of any pupils at the school.
- **Ground 4:** The safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened (whether by a breakdown of discipline or otherwise).
- **Ground 5:** The governing body or head teacher has failed, or is likely to fail, to comply with a duty under the Education Acts.
- **Ground 6:** The governing body or head teacher has acted, or is proposing to act unreasonably in the exercise of any of its or his or her functions under the Education Acts.

Step 4: Statutory intervention by the Local Authority

Where a school is 'eligible for intervention' following the issue of a warning notice there are a number of powers the local authority or Welsh Ministers may use. Local authorities must give reasonable notice (the timing of the notice will be dependent on the particular issue that is to be addressed) in writing to the governing body that they propose to exercise their powers. Local authority powers include:

- Requirement to secure advice or collaborate
- Appointment of additional governors
- The suspension of delegated authority for the governing body to manage a school's budget
- The appointment of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace the school's existing governing body

Appendix

The Local Authority

The Education Welfare Service in Torfaen is committed to promoting regular attendance and wellbeing of all pupils. Research shows that irregular and disrupted attendance can have a negative impact upon pupil attainment, future career and employment prospects. The Education Welfare Service promotes regular attendance by:

- Following the Local Authority's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies where they have professional concerns;
- Ensuring that the Local Authority fulfills its statutory responsibilities relating to attendance;
- Providing schools with current monthly attendance data
- Monitoring the attendance of all registered pupils and analysing the attendance data of cohorts of vulnerable pupils such as LAC, Minority Ethnic and Gypsy Travellers;
- Providing Head teachers, schools and their governing bodies with advice, guidance, support and challenge to ensure that schools have appropriate attendance processes in place;
- Working proactively with other agencies to address underlying issues which may impact upon pupil attendance;
- Ensuring that appropriate regulations are followed where young people are engaged in employment/entertainment productions.

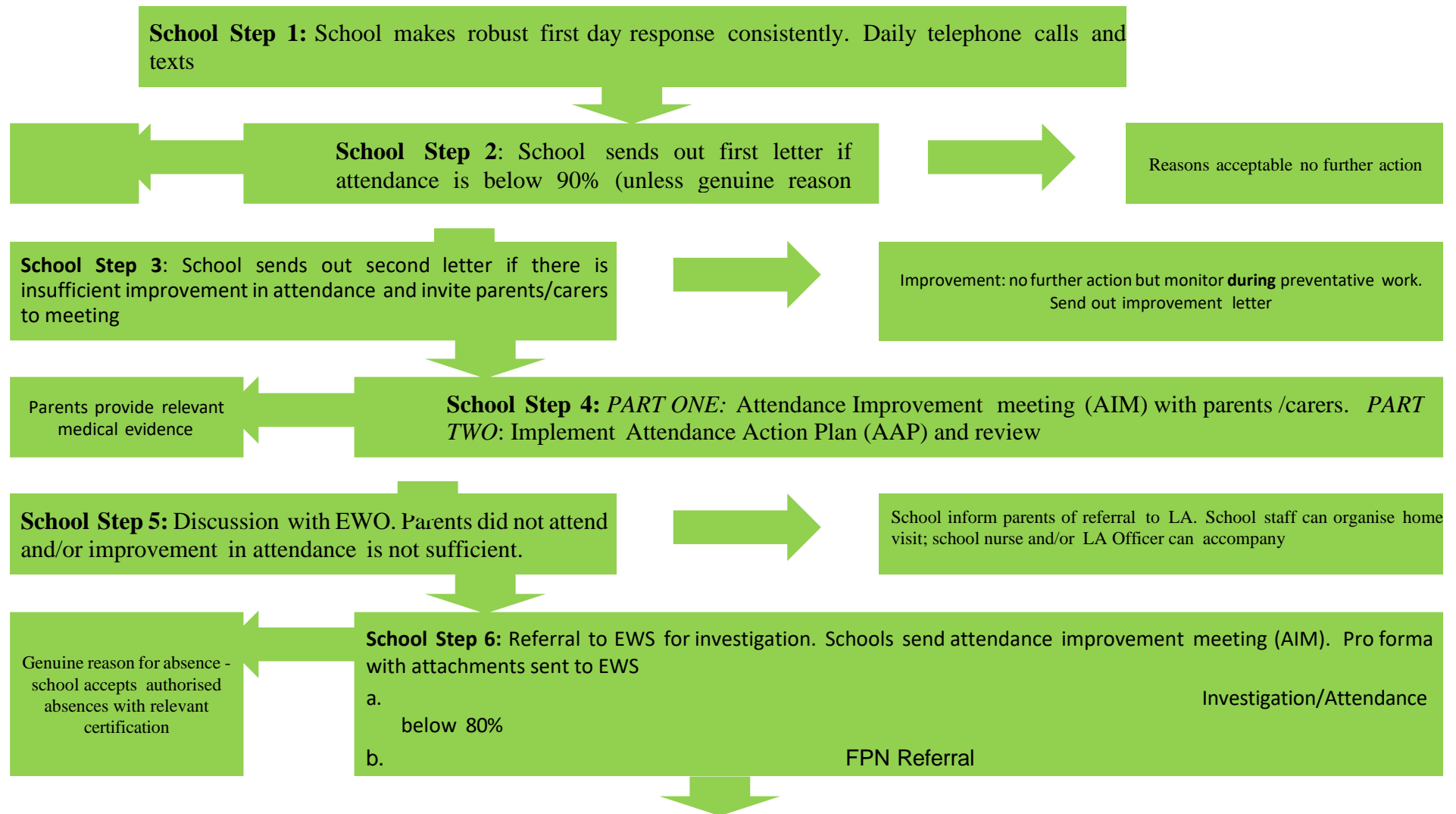
Torfaen Education Service will work with schools to improve attendance levels by:

- Promote the importance of good attendance
- Provide schools with an Attendance Improvement Pathway
- Provide schools with An Attendance Resource Toolkit
- Supply schools with up to date attendance figures monthly
- Provide and promote good attendance by the use of advertising

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

- Provide competitions and certificates and banners to improve attendance
- Provide schools with an Attendance Handbook
- Host regular school to school meetings with head teachers to co-construct a positive and successful approach to improving school attendance
- Provide training for schools and Governing Bodies if requested

Appendix



Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

LA Step 8: LA supports strategies to improve attendance:

- Pupil seen in school.
- Home visits.
- Alternative curricular if KS4.
- Signposting to other agencies

LA Step 7: Referral accepted open case on the basis of evidence School Step 1-6 complete.

EWS
strategies

LA

No improvement.
Referral to the

LA Step 10: Legal action considered

Pupil back in school, but kept as open case until attendance at acceptable level, then monitor as preventative

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

Torfaen County Borough Council

School Attendance Strategy 2022 - 2024

**Enabling Progress for all Learners
Attending Inspiring Achieving**

#NotInMissOut

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate

1. Vision and priorities

1.1. The key priorities we want to achieve are:

- Attend
- Inspire
- Achieve

1.2. We see a future for people of all ages where they can fulfil their dreams and achieve their full potential. They will continue to learn and develop throughout their lives, becoming healthy, creative, responsible and caring adults. The strategy scope and thinking is aligned to the philosophy of the Curriculum for Wales, especially the 4 purposes.

1.3. We believe that at the foundation of this is good education for all our children and that regular attendance and punctuality at school are the key drivers in ensuring children of school age are properly engaged in education. The local authority, schools and settings will take the necessary steps to improve attendance and ensure that all welfare needs of school-aged children are addressed. Torfaen County Borough Council's education welfare officers work collaboratively with partner agencies to address barriers to learning and social inclusion, and to promote school attendance.

2. Introduction

2.1. Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) as of autumn 2022, has circa 12,000 compulsory school age pupils on roll at schools across the County. At present, the standards being attained by our pupils are below the all-Wales average and the gap is widening. Where children are in formal education, a high level of school attendance is essential for children to ensure they thrive academically and socially. Children who miss school for unauthorised reasons often miss critical parts of the curriculum which then can also increase the risk of falling behind and disengagement with education by the child. Children can also become socially isolated when they miss out on shared learning and social experiences with their peers in school on a regular basis. Therefore, it is critically important that we ensure that all children in Torfaen schools are making the most of their learning opportunities through regular attendance. Accessing education is identified under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in articles 28 and 29.

3. National context

3.1. The policy document 'Every Child Matters' was introduced by national government in 2003 which was partly in response to the death of Victoria Climbié. This sets out the following outcomes for children and young people:

- stay safe
- be healthy
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic wellbeing

3.2. Evidence suggests that there is a clear link between good educational attainment and high school attendance. Poor attendance at school has a detrimental effect on a child's learning and can have a huge impact on their wellbeing. We consider that positive attendance at school is the key to raising standards of achievement.

4. Local context

4.1. Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) is committed to maintaining consistently high levels of pupil attendance at school and recognises that improving attendance is a crucial factor in maintaining standards of pupil performance and achievement. TCBC will strive to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all pupils.

4.2. It is not a legal requirement that pupils be educated at a school. The legal requirements on parents in relation to the education of their children are set out in section 7 of Education Act (EA) 1996. That section provides that every parent of every child of compulsory school age must ensure that he or she receives efficient full-time education at a school or otherwise.

4.3. Parents may satisfy their duty under this section by providing efficient full-time education, suitable to the child (within the meaning of section 7), otherwise than at a school. The term 'otherwise than at a school' is broad enough to encompass education at home.

4.4. Section 10 of EA 1996 places the Welsh Ministers under a general duty to promote the education of the people of Wales.

4.5. TCBC believes that for most children their educational needs will be best met within the school system, and that, where this is the route selected by parents, that this requires a commitment to regular school attendance.

- 4.6. Regular school attendance is vital for pupils. Failure of pupils, 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.

5. What we value: our principles

- 5.1. Our attendance strategy has been developed with the following key principles at its heart:

- Pupils' achievements and progress are directly influenced by attendance.
- Poor attendance can lead to reduced motivation and involvement in education.
- Schools play a critical role in attendance and the actions of school staff are significant factors in influencing pupil behaviour and attitudes, in particular those relating to attendance.
- Pupils should feel supported and have their attendance valued and rewarded.
- Our starting point is an assumption that most pupils want to attend school to learn and to achieve their full potential but may not always be able to do so for reasons beyond their control. The school plays a critical role in the early identification of the barriers to education for all pupils.
- All pupils have the right of equal access to a good education and should not be deprived of opportunity by non-attendance at school.
- Pupils, parents and carers have clear responsibilities to ensure good attendance. These should be made clear to them by the school through good communication.
- Pupils are more likely to respond positively, to learn and to attend, where they are treated equally, rewarded and supported.
- The start and end to the school day, and procedures for registration, have a substantial influence on pupils' attitudes and attendance. Good punctuality and robust systems for ensuring pupils are punctual are a significant factor in promoting attendance.
- Pupils are less likely to be poor attendees when attendance is monitored and followed up swiftly.
- Robust systems for identifying and responding to the needs of different pupils' reasons for absence are critical.
- The engagement of pupils in ensuring good attendance is important. Pupils are likely to respond more positively when their views are sought, they are listened to and there is an appropriate response to their needs and opinions.

6. The legal context

- 6.1 While the parent is primarily responsible for ensuring their child attends their registered school regularly, where school attendance problems occur, the key to resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the local authority. There is, however, a legal framework for the role of the school and of the local authority which sets out their responsibilities in this sphere.

6.2 The legal framework governing attendance is established in various Education Acts and their associated regulations.

The Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on:

- the local authority to provide schools and enforce attendance; and
- schools to register attendance and notify the local authority of a child's absence from school.

Section 7 of the above Act states that:

6.3 '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:

6.4 'The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law'.

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

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/parents belong;
- the pupil's catchment school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the local authority; and
- a limited defence is available to the parents of Traveller children.

Section 437 of the Education Act 1996 states

- 6.5 2(1) If it appears to a local authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.”

Where a parent on whom a notice has been served fails to satisfy the local authority, within the period specified in the notice, that the child is receiving suitable education, and in the opinion of the local authority, it is expedient that the child should attend school, the authority shall serve on the parent a “school attendance order” in such form as may be prescribed, requiring him to cause the child to become a registered pupil at a school named in the order.

7. The role of the local authority

- 7.1 The focus for the local authority is that of early intervention and prevention, working in a more targeted way with pupils and their families. Schools are supported to identify children where there are early signs of poor attendance.
- 7.2 The local authority will support schools in taking a rigorous line in reducing absence. While the main focus is always to build strong positive relationships with parents and schools, the local authority will progress prosecutions where it considers this is appropriate and where it has a legal obligation to do so. For electively home educated pupils, if the local authority is not satisfied that the child is receiving a suitable education, the local authority can serve a school attendance order notice on the parent(s) requiring them to satisfy the local authority within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.
- 7.3 Parents and carers will be encouraged to work closely with education welfare officers (EWOs) and other services, however, where there is non-engagement and/or no improvement in attendance, the local authority will pursue prosecutions. In some situations, failure to meet a child’s educational needs can become a cause for referral to other agencies by virtue of the duty to report under the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 (SSWBA).

Targeted interventions

- 7.4 The EWS can offer additional support to schools on a needs-led basis in order to improve attendance. This will form part of a 'team around the school approach' which entails the Lead EWO and schools discussing the individual need and arranging an appropriate plan for improving attendance. This is an intensive intervention approach and involves the community teams working together around the school and community to improve attendance levels. This could consist of a range of initiatives, for example attendance panels including governor involvement, parents, pupils, EWS and school staff. Attendance is discussed in a formal setting and sets out the importance of regular school attendance and the consequences if attendance fails to improve. Homes are visited to those pupils not in school without good reason and targeting those with persistent absence.

Fixed penalty notices

- 7.5 Fixed penalty notices (FPNs) will allow schools to issue FPNs to the parents of children and young people who have unauthorised absences from school. FPNs came into force in September 2014 as a result of new legislation (ie the Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013). A Code of Conduct has been devised by TCBC. The issuing of the FPNs will rest with the EWS in response to requests from headteachers, nominated representatives or police officers. FPNs have been widely used in England for several years. It is anticipated that FPNs will be used to improve attendance and prevent unnecessary absences from school in the following circumstances:
- Minimum of 10 unauthorised absences in the current year
 - Minimum of 10 sessions of lateness after close of registration
 - Unauthorised absence due to a term-time holiday
 - Pupil regularly coming to the attention of the police during school hours with justified reason
 - Parents/carers have failed to engage with schools/EWS but where court sanctions have not been instigated
- 7.6 The EWS and the school will take into account the following in considering whether a FPN can be issued:
- level of absence;
 - any equalities considerations;
 - statement of special educational needs;
 - history of attendance;
 - defences which may be available;
 - level of parental engagement; and
 - any adverse effect a fine will have on the welfare of the family.

7.7 The withdrawal of a FPN may only be revoked where it is proven that:

- the notice has been issued to the wrong person to an incorrect address;
- the notice did not conform to code of conduct;
- evidence demonstrates that the notice should not have been issued (eg medical evidence provided); and
- circumstances warrant its withdrawal.

7.8 The legislation governing the implementation of FPN is outlined in:

- Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013
- Rights of Children and Young Persons Measure 2011
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (the right to an education)

7.9 A FPN is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days, the local authority must either prosecute parents/carers for the offence or withdraw the notice.

Term-time holidays

7.12 TCBC recognises the effect that absence from school has on educational attainment. Headteachers have the discretion of authorising up to 5 days under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday, and in law, must apply for permission in advance.

8. The education welfare officer

8.1 The education welfare officer (EWO) has the responsibility of implementing the statutory duties in relation to securing school attendance. The EWO has a key function in working with schools, families, pupils, agencies, statutory and voluntary in order to promote regular school attendance.

- 8.2 The EWO will continue to take the lead role for the local authority in supporting school attendance and meet with school staff on a weekly basis. The EWO works with children and families, other agencies and continue to support schools. The EWO is managed and funded centrally. Each school has a dedicated EWO

9. The role of parents

- 9.1 Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly. Parents are expected to report their child's absence from school on the first day of absence and on the return provide a written explanation. Parents are requested to avoid taking family holidays during term time, and work with schools and relevant agencies when pupils have attendance issues.
- 9.2 In addition to attendance, punctuality is equally important. If a pupil continually arrives to school five minutes late, this will amount to losing three days each year. If a pupil arrives after the closure of the register, then this will count as an unauthorised absence which if deemed appropriate may lead to a referral to the EWO.
- 9.3 Absence can also make children vulnerable to involvement with crime and anti- social behaviour.
- 9.4 The report 'Improving attendance at school' carried out by the Department of Education in England in 2010, explains there is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement of pupils who miss more than 50% of school, 3% manage to achieve 5 or more GCSE at Grade A*-C including Mathematics and English. It highlights that 73% of pupils who have over 95% attendance achieve 5 or more GCSE at Grades A*-C.
- 9.5 Not only is school attendance and attainment important, it also enables young people to maintain positive friendships, promotes wellbeing and provides them with good grounding for their future.
- 9.6 Parents/carers can support the regular and punctual attendance of their children by:
- ensuring that their child arrives at school on time each day
 - ensuring that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance
 - notifying the school as soon as possible of any absence and confirm this in writing when the child returns to school
 - not booking family holidays during term-time
 - talking to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend

10. The responsibility of schools

- 10.1 Schools have a statutory duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. All schools within TCBC have a clear attendance policy which sets out how attendance is managed and monitored. All school staff should be trained on attendance and made aware of the school's attendance policy.
- 10.2 Schools should communicate all attendance and welfare concerns to their nominated EWO. A nominated governor should have the lead responsibility for attendance. All schools should adopt a first day absence procedures to ensure and safeguard pupils and to ensure all parents are made aware when their child is not in school.

11. Data collection, attendance targets and auditing

- 11.1 Schools supply attendance data through their schools Management Information System (MIS). Data is reported to the EAS acting on behalf of the local authority as a commissioned service with the responsibility for school improvement. Attendance data is also provided to Welsh Government and is used to inform national performance indicators. The local authority has access to data shared on a cluster basis.
- 11.2 Torfaen uses a Capita One (offered referred to as "One") to compile reports that are used for a variety of audiences, including the Welsh Government and the region and internal self-evaluation. One draws data directly from SIMS.
- 11.3 The accuracy and validity of data is directly linked to how it is entered into SIMS at a school level as schools are the data controllers. The EWS has provided a very useful Information Management Calendar designed for the lead SIMS operator in school. This calendar sets out what activities and checking should be carried out on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis. It should be followed to avoid any errors being made which could impact on wider data collection.
- 11.4 Attendance audits will be undertaken for all schools. Lead EWO distributes an Attendance Audit Toolkit for schools in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of attendance processes in each school, and also to devise an action plan for improvements from these. Key features will include:
- examining existing procedures;
 - inspecting attendance information;
 - related documentation and school policies;
 - assessing the type and levels of communication with parents;
 - interviewing staff and pupils;

- analysing attendance data;
- considering school strategies used to promote attendance and sharing good practice; and
- evaluating the effectiveness of early intervention and support services.

12. Training and support

- 12.1 All staff with responsibility for attendance in schools should receive appropriate training including the correct use of codes, appropriate challenge to parents, accurate input of data, exporting data and also full usage and knowledge of SIMS.
- 12.2 TCBC's EWOs will offer support to all schools covering such issues as:
- strategies for promoting regular attendance;
 - strategies for addressing persistent absenteeism;
 - improving communication with parents;
 - good practice in monitoring punctuality;
 - developing a whole-school attendance policy; and
 - rewards and incentives.
- 12.3 The EWOs will periodically lay on training for all schools to access (please see training calendar) and will also offer bespoke training to school when requested.

13. Celebrating good and improved attendance

- 13.1 Schools are encouraged to promote good attendance using a range of initiatives at a whole school, year group, class or individual pupil level.
- 13.2 This can include certificates, pens or prizes such as books. Achievements that are congratulated in assemblies are considered to be particularly effective. All schools should display their attendance marketing materials appropriately in foyers, school websites, classrooms, walls and banners can be used on the periphery of the school estate. This helps raise awareness and the importance of good attendance for pupils, teachers, parents and visitors to schools.

- 13.3 Schools must ensure it takes the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 into consideration and not disadvantage those pupils with a disability or medical condition. This means that a young person with an attendance record of less than 100% because of health reasons should not be negatively impacted with regards to schools rewards systems.

14. Traveller children

- 14.1 We will work closely with the families of Traveller children to ensure they are attending school. The local authority equalities and engagement officer will be able to provide advice and guidance to schools to ensure the regular attendance of children from Traveller communities. Schools are particularly encouraged to:
- create an inclusive culture which promotes equality and recognises cultural diversity and difference;
 - show high expectations of attendance with all registered pupils;
 - respond promptly to absences through immediate telephone or other enquiries;
 - refer any continuing or repeated absence to the EWS;
 - develop strategies to support pupils with literacy or learning difficulties;
 - support educational continuity while children are travelling;
 - give additional support if needed on entry to school for traveller children;
 - ensure adequate support during transition (eg from key stage 2 to key stage 3; and
 - seek appropriate advice from the local authority if necessary.

15. Supporting the attendance of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN)

- 15.1 TCBC recognises that children with ALN or SEN (special educational needs), regardless of whether this has been formally diagnosed, may prevent some children from attending school. The EWO and educational psychology service, will work with headteachers, the school additional learning needs coordinator (ALNCO) and other school staff to address pupil's poor attendance which may be related to unidentified or unmet SEN.

16. Supporting the attendance of pupils who may have been bullied

- 16.1 TCBC recognises that bullying is an issue which prevents some children from attending school or from achieving their full potential when they do attend.
- 16.2 TCBC will, in partnership with schools, continue to offer support to pupils where attendance is being affected by actual or perceived bullying.

17. Supporting the attendance of vulnerable groups

- 17.1 TCBC will respond appropriately to support school attendance of pupils considered vulnerable. The Inclusion Service will play a key role in supporting such pupils. Such groups might include:
- pregnant school girls and teenage mothers;
 - children transferring school;
 - children entering school outside the normal year of entry;
 - young offenders;
 - children from families under stress;
 - young carers;
 - school phobics;
 - looked after children;
 - those eligible for free school meals;
 - children with special educational needs; and
 - pupils whose parents are actively considering deregistration from school to become EHE (electively home educated).

The EWS will work closely with the TCBC Vulnerable Groups Team to support these groups identified by Estyn as potentially vulnerable.

18. Action planning and Addressing Whole School Attendance Protocol

- 18.1 The EWO will work with schools to develop action plans to improve attendance at whole school level. This will rely on individual schools' analysis of data and of its attendance profile. Schools should work closely with the EWO to develop action plans for school level action as well as developing individual pupil level action plans.
- 18.2 Schools with concerning levels of absence will be encouraged to develop an agreed school action plan to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism.

18.3 The main areas that should be covered in the whole school action plan are as follows:

- improved senior leadership response to attendance;
- robust recording and monitoring systems;
- improved tracking and monitoring arrangements;
- targeted additional support;
- Improve support and challenge for parents
- targeted support to vulnerable groups;
- working with partners to support parents to reduce illness related absence;
- target specific work with parents of children in early years settings to ensure good attendance habits are developed early and parents understand their responsibilities; and workforce development

18.4 The **Addressing Whole School Attendance Protocol** is a regionally adopted approach designed to tackle continued issues with underperformance. The table below sets out the graduated approach.

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with HT or attendance Lead with LA representative responsible for attendance (hosted by LA) to discuss initial concerns/monitor progress.• Attendance Review Meetings can be arranged at any point in the process below.
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with HT and/or attendance lead (at HT's discretion) with LA representative responsible for attendance (hosted by LA). Any actions agreed during this meeting will be monitored after one full school term to ensure they have been actioned.• Self evaluation document completed by school.
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting with HT and attendance lead (at HT's discretion), Senior LA representatives, school CA. This meeting will explore sustained concerns. Any actions agreed during this meeting will be monitored after one full school term to ensure they have been actioned .
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance Summit held with HT, Chair of Governors, Chief Education Officer, CA, Cabinet member for Education and Young People. During the summit, the school will present their historical and current year data and a forensic exploration of the systems used to manage attendance. Additionally, the school will share its plans for addressing the issues identified.• The LA will identify whether it is appropriate to provide additional resources to the school to support their attendance action plan. The LA will determine if 'limited, satisfactory, very good or strong' progress has been made by a school after each EIB meeting has taken place.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a maximum of three school terms, if progress has not been made, consideration to issuing a statutory warning notice will be given.
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Issuing of a Statutory Warning Notice</u> • Where the LA deems it appropriate, a Statutory Warning Notice will be issued when a school has not made strong progress in their rate of attendance or actions to promote school attendance.

19. National Context and Guidance

The Welsh Government Guidance document, *Inclusion and Pupil Support* 2016, provides advice and guidance and sets out responsibilities for maintaining high levels of attendance, positive behaviour and well-being of all pupils.

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolhome/pupilsupport/inclusionpupilsupportguidance/?lang=en>

The *All Wales Attendance Framework* provides a toolkit on practice standards and guidance for Education Welfare Service practitioners. This key document aims to ensure greater consistency of practice throughout Wales and the toolkit usefully includes a section for schools that contains examples of strategies that can be employed to improve school attendance and manage lateness. An electronic version of the document is available at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/110308section3en.pdf>

The Welsh Government's *All Wales Attendance Framework*, contains strategies that schools can adopt to improve attendance and manage lateness.

Nurture. Achieve. Celebrate