

St Brides Major CW Primary School



*Love Learning for Life
Caru Dysgu am Oes*

Attendance Policy

Staff and governors at St Brides Major CW Primary School believe that positive school attendance is a right and entitlement for their learners and that being in school not only gives their learners the best chance of succeeding academically and fulfilling their best potential as a learner but also enables them to maximise their access to the many social and pastoral and life enriching opportunities that schools offer.

Our school ethos and vision embody this and all staff in the school have a responsibility for supporting the wellbeing and education our learners are entitled to by ensuring that all interactions embody the approaches needed to support and welcome all learners on a daily basis to our school.

All school staff, not just those named as having particular responsibility to support attendance, are part of our school vision and approach to foster positive attendance. We will support parents, carers and learners where there are barriers or obstacles to attendance in a range of ways and will work alongside other partner agencies and professionals to help families when difficulties arise.

School and the Local Authority (LA) monitor attendance and will communicate with parents/carers if concerns arise. School will seek to understand the reasons behind any non-attendance and will work with you to resolve these concerns. They may also link to the Inclusion Team for support or other teams and agencies as needed. Penalty measures for non-attendance will, in line with Welsh Government guidance, only be used as a last resort and in the most extreme cases. School and the Inclusion Team will have tried a range of options and penalty measures will be used only when a range of reasonable efforts to engage with the family have been tried and have failed and where it is evident that there are no underlying reasons that are impacting upon attendance at school.

We want our learners to enjoy coming to school and to know that it is a place where they can learn and develop in safety but also where they belong and are connected and where their presence is noted and valued. We have mechanism in place for ensuring children do not become missing in education, their absences are always noted and any concerns are escalated and that any learners leaving the school are not removed from roll until the relevant onward destinations are notified. Where absences are approved or unauthorised this will be based on fair objective criteria but which will take into account personal circumstances.

Where non-attendance or low attendance is a concern we will consider the reasons for non-attendance in a child focused way, looking at possible reason for non-attendance as reported by the learner and parent/ carer but also at any possible pastoral needs or issues, curriculum difficulties, additional learning needs concerns, social and emotional needs and any physical or mental health needs. We will look to support families with any home-based issues that can be impacting upon the learners wellbeing, motivation or attendance. We will consider attendance issues through a range of lenses such as:

- Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) approaches
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) aware approach
- Rights of the Child
- Restorative approaches
- Relational approaches
- Learner Voice
- Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) approaches

School attendance although encouraged and celebrated will never be rewarded in such a way that it means learners with disabilities or health conditions are treated less favourably than their peers. As a school we will differentiate between approved and non-approved absences and will take into account both physical and mental health conditions in the way absences are recorded and responded to.

Reduced timetables:

Where a learner is not able to access a full-time school or education provision then this is documented by schools in the Vale of Glamorgan, using the process and format of a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP). This document is usually a multi-agency document and process and must include the engagement and consent of the parent as well as regular reviews of the PSP. The PSP will set out the reasons why a full-time education is not able to be accessed but will also set out the measures which are in place to increase the learners access to full time education as soon as is possible. As these arrangements mean a child is not accessing a full-time education in school these plans are reviewed regularly and never a long term or indefinite agreement.

Absences which have not been accounted for can become a safeguarding concern for school and will be acted upon on this basis. Learners who do not attend for significant periods of time without prior approval by the headteacher may become classified as Children Missing Education (CME) and could lose their school place.

Parents /carers should ensure that their children arrive at school on time, and late marks will be entered and monitored in addition to attendance overall.

Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is the school administer. He / She is responsible for regularly checking attendance data and ensuring data is accurate and up to date. The Attendance Officer will:

- ensure that data is inputted daily into the SIMS attendance management system.
- ensure that parents/carers of absent children are contacted where notification of absence has not been received.

- respond to any parent seeking support on attendance concerns.
- provide regular attendance and punctuality data for relevant staff and external agencies in line with the agreed procedures and timescales.
- be responsible for disseminating important attendance information including informing the Attendance Leader of which children are of concern; in-line with the agreed procedures and timescales.
- be responsible for keeping a record of the interventions in place to encourage attendance and for generating all documentation including letters to parents /carers.
- be responsible for liaising closely with the LA's Attendance Team to ensure appropriate levels of intervention take place; referrals are made, and attendance meetings are set up.
- be responsible for managing and maintaining attendance records and systems.

The school aims to create a learning community which benefits from the positive behaviour, regular attendance and well-being of its pupils and staff.

All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Equally, parents /carers have a duty and responsibility to ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis. The LA has a duty to promote and enforce attendance.

Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

It is acknowledged that all children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems which arise with attendance are initially best resolved in discussions between the school, the parents/carers and the child.

- The school bases its attendance policy on the guidelines as set out by the All Wales Attendance Framework (2011).
- Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents /carers, the school shares with them, and the LA, responsibility for encouraging good attendance and improving poor attendance.
- The school is required by law to maintain specific records and to produce specified information on the attendance of pupils.
- The impact of poor attendance is profound. Absence and exclusion from school are associated with a higher risk of poor educational achievement and attainment and can also impact on pupil wellbeing.

- The LA has a statutory duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education and, if a registered pupil at school, this means attending school regularly and on time.

Statutory Responsibilities

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations (which relate to schools and Pupil Referral Units).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *"...the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/ her to receive full time education suitable to his/ her age, aptitude and ability and to any special education needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise..."*

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

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

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

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/ parent belongs.

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

Practice and Procedures

The school encourages good attendance and punctuality by:

- creating a caring and nurturing environment whereby pupils' feels safe and appreciated as young people;
- ensuring that attendance and punctuality are recognised within the whole school ethos and commended in ways that take account of individual circumstances including any form of medical need or disability.
- developing positive relationships with parents / carers and external agencies working with the family/ pupil;
- monitoring and evaluating the early intervention strategies adopted by the school;
- working closely with multi agency colleagues and the Vale Inclusion Team to improve attendance and punctuality;
- monitoring attendance data and trends and reporting this information termly to the Governing Body.

Specific actions:

- The school will make its policy on attendance available to parents /carers and pupils.
- The school will also communicate the importance of attendance to parents /carers and pupils through assemblies, the school prospectus, newsletters and the school website / Facebook page.
- If no contact is received by the parent/ carer of an absent pupil on the first morning of the absence, a telephone call is made by the school's administration staff to investigate the reason for the absence. If the school is not able to contact the family, then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (N no reason yet provided for absence).
- Details of the absence are recorded, if later received, and discussed with the headteacher and a decision will be made with regards to authorisation as soon as possible. The headteacher may ask the Inclusion Team for advice with regards to this but the decision to authorise any absence remains with the school.
- If the pupil is registered as a Looked After Child or on the Child Protection register and absent from school without reason, then the school should contact Children's Services and the Vulnerable Groups team as soon as possible.
- When a pupil returns to school from an absence, but no explanation is offered, a letter will be sent to the parent.
- A letter will also be sent out where there are concerns about attendance or if a pupil is persistently late to school.
- It is essential that, when school staff feel that a worrying pattern of non-attendance is emerging that they endeavour to meet with families and work closely with them to ensure that the appropriate level of intervention and support can be offered to the parent/carers and child to improve attendance.
- Where school-based interventions do not improve attendance, advice will be sought from the Inclusion Team. Where overall attendance is less than 80% and the main cause of absence is unauthorised, a formal referral to the Team will be considered.
- Where a pupil is missing for 10 school days (due to unauthorised absence), Schools have a duty to refer to the LA (Inclusion Team) on the tenth day of absence where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/carers or child or have child welfare concerns (Statutory Guidance to prevent children and young people from missing education, Welsh Government circular no: 002/2017).

- The Welsh Government (WG) Education (Penalty Notice) (Wales) Regulations 2013 states that LAs are required by law to adhere to the Education Act 1996 section 444 to include penalty notices as one of the interventions to promote better school attendance.
- Only Headteachers can authorise the absence of children and young people.
- Information regarding the cause of the absence will always be required from parents/ carers.

The school will also:

- ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law relating to school attendance;
- complete school registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session – the register is open for **30** minutes and closes at **xxxx** am;
- stress to parents and carers the importance of contacting the school as early as possible on the first day of absence;
- promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence;
- consult with all members of the school's community and Inclusion Team in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy;
- ensure regular evaluation of attendance by the Governing Body;
- work towards ensuring all pupils are supported and valued and so want to attend school.

The Designated Member of Staff

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

- monitors the school's registers;
- liaises with teaching staff, in particular Heads of Year;
- meets with the Inclusion team on a regular pre-arranged basis;
- refers to other agencies if appropriate;
- oversees the use of standardised letters to parents /carers addressing specific aspects of attendance and requiring parental response;
- arranges for an attendance meeting/education planning meeting where appropriate;
- ensures that the LA Inclusion Team's role is known and that the referral process to the Team is understood in school.

Responsibilities of Parents / Carers

Parents / carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered, regularly and on time.

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

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

Registration

Keeping the registers

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

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

Lateness

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

Holidays

The headteacher has the discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday and will consider every case on an individual basis. Parents /carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday during term time. However, there may be circumstances that warrant a pupil taking time off in term time and therefore headteachers are best placed to make the decision. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 state that headteachers have a discretionary power to authorise leave for a family holiday during term time where parents / carers seek permission. Parents /carers can access a holiday request form from school for this purpose. Except for exceptional circumstances, no more than 10 days leave should be granted for this purpose.

Extended Overseas Trips

These should only be agreed where schools have taken into full account the Welsh Government guidance and individual circumstances. Parents/carers should be advised of the impact such a lengthy absence will have upon their child(ren) and be encouraged, where possible to take their holiday to coincide with school closure. Trips overseas are the same as family holidays and parents can access a request form within the school. It is critical that pupils time in school is maximised and whether it is for linguistic or delayed attainment reasons, parents /carers need to be encouraged to plan for trips in the 13 weeks available to them outside term times. An agreed date of return should be made with the school prior to the trip. Failure to return on the agreed date, can result in your child(ren) being taken off roll. In these circumstances the parents/carers would need to make an application for re-admission on their return to UK and may not be guaranteed the school of their choice, as all available places could be taken. Therefore, a change of school would be required.

Registration Codes

Code	Description
/\	Present at registration
L	<i>Late but arrived before the register closed</i>
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
J	Interview
W	Work experience (not work based training)
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
F	Agreed extended family holiday

H	Agreed family holiday
I	Illness
M	Medical or dental appointment
S	Study leave
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
T	Traveller absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
G	Family holiday (not agreed or in excess of agreement)
U	Late and arrived after the register closed
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Pupil not on roll yet
#	School closed to all pupils

Monitoring and Review	
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Signed Chair	