



Derwendeg Primary School

Attendance Policy

Date of this review: January 2024
Date of next review: January 2025

Signed:CA Rogers..... Date: ...26/01/2024.....

Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CA Rogers', written over a horizontal line.

Signed: Date:26.01.24.....

Headteacher

Mission Statement

Derwendeg Primary is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcomed and are committed to the fundamental principle that early intervention and partnership working is crucial in ensuring the attendance, protection and well-being of all children and young people.

The school will follow the All Wales Child Protection procedures and local protocols in relation to specific and identifiable welfare issues that prevent a child or young pupil from accessing education, or where there are safeguarding concerns.

For a pupil to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to education law and guidance and this school attendance policy is written to reflect this legislation and the guidance produced by the Welsh Government (WG).

The legislation makes provision for a school day which is to be divided into two sessions with a lunch break in the middle and to be available for at least 190 days in any school year.

The school will review its strategies for improving attendance on an annual basis to ensure that it is achieving its set goals and targets as identified by the Governors, Local Authority (LA) and the Education Achievement Service (EAS).

This policy will contain the procedures that the school will use to work towards meeting its attendance targets.

School procedures

Any pupil who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period will have their absence recorded as being authorised; unauthorised, or as an approved educational activity (an arranged LA provision or school organised provision or events). Only the Head Teacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise an absence.

If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unexplained (code N) and promptly followed up by the school, as part of its early intervention and safeguarding strategies.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the WG, as in the table below.

The registration system

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Categorisation of absences

All pupils who are on role but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

- Authorised Absence
- Unauthorised Absence
- Approved Educational Activity

Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid; only the Head Teacher can authorise an absence. Apart from leave of absence for a holiday, these absences will include for example, sessions off where the Head Teacher has agreed with the LA, to issue a licence for the child or young person to take part in a specific entertainment performance or filming.

Approved educational activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off the school site but with the approval of the school and or the LA.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education at another venue
- Education arranged by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 9:00 am. The register will remain open until 09:30am. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (code U), unless there is an acceptable explanation.

In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, we can mark the pupil as arriving late (L), provided that written evidence of the appointment time is provided and the time arriving at school is recorded. For medical absences outside of this timeframe, the appropriate medical absence (code M) must be entered.

Pupils arriving after the start of school (from 09:03am) but before the end of the registration period will be coded as late (L).

Afternoon registration will be at 12:55 pm and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as absent, unless there is an acceptable explanation. Pupils arriving after the start of afternoon registration period will be coded as late.

Reasons for lateness will be recorded in SIMs using the comments function. Lateness will be monitored by the School Attendance Clerk and Headteacher on a weekly basis. Families who are persistently late will be contacted, initially by telephone, and if no improvements in punctuality is seen, a letter will be sent and a meeting arranged.

Parents and carers are reminded that The LA may issue a FPN for persistent lateness after the close of the register, in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct, if in excess of 10 sessions. More information on the FPN scheme can be found at www.caerphilly.gov.uk

First day absence

Parents and carers are reminded that it is their responsibility to advise school on any day their child is unable to attend. However, for safeguarding purposes, we will endeavour to ascertain the specific reason for non-attendance as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This will involve a Dojo message initially requesting the parent/carer contact the school with the reason for absence. If there is no response, there will be a telephone call to parents/ carers. Once the specific information is received, the register will be amended to reflect the appropriate absence code as in Figure 1 above.

Priority will be given to children who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, eg. those known to child protection/safeguarding services or are looked after (CLA). The locality children services team will be notified of unexplained absences of more than one day of a pupil on the child protection register, or on the first day following the weekend.

Third day absence

On the third day of absence and if school has not received an adequate explanation, a letter will be sent to the parent or carer requesting this information. The absences will remain unauthorised, until an adequate explanation is received. We will make use of all numbers held as additional contact details for each pupil. School will also refer to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) on the third day. However, should there be any concerns around well-being or safeguarding, a referral will be made to Children's Services.

Leave of absence/holidays in term time

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged. Parents and carers do not have the automatic right to withdraw their children from school for an annual holiday and will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement.

Parents and carers must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence. The school will consider any application for leave of absence, taking into account factors such as the length and purpose of the leave requirement, time of year of the proposed trip, impact on continuity of learning, circumstances of the family and the pupil's attendance history. The Headteacher can authorise a maximum of 10 days absence in one academic year. Where absence has been below the Callio green level of 95% over the previous 12 months, the Headteacher will not grant holiday leave. School may also ask to meet with parents/carers to discuss their request before a decision is made.

When parents and carers fail to abide by the decision of the school, either by taking holidays that have not been agreed, keeping the child away from school or alternative provision arranged by school or the LA, in excess of the period agreed, or fail to apply for permission, the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Extended overseas trips

The Head Teacher may only agree to an extended leave of absence for more than 10 days in exceptional circumstances. Examples of these include:

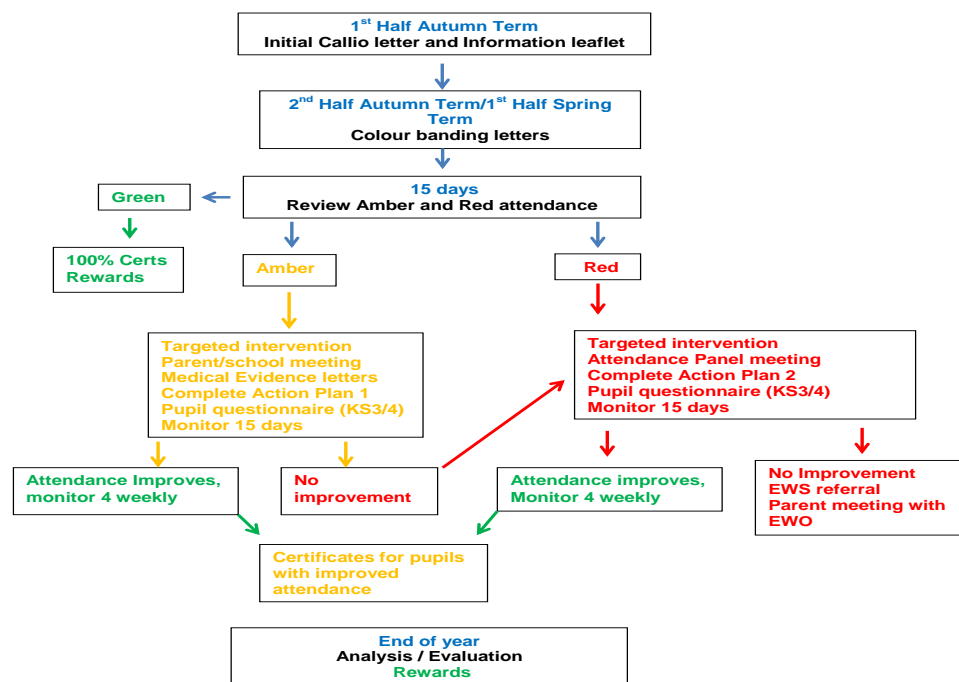
- Parent working abroad for a fixed, medium term period;
- Family are returning to country of origin;
- Parent returning from active tour of duty.

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

Attendance Tracking

Within the school it is the responsibility of the class teacher or school attendance clerk to be aware of and bring attention to the Head Teacher (or person to whom they have delegated responsibility for attendance), any emerging attendance concerns.

The school will follow the Callio approach to attendance, which is outlined below:



The school acknowledge that for some pupils, a range of personal and / or complex circumstances can impact negatively on attendance. We will therefore aim to work with the pupil, family and partner agencies to help address any issues identified.

Promoting attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents or carers and pupils. We will ensure that our pupils and their parents or carers, are made aware of the importance of good attendance and how this will benefit them; we will use a variety of strategies to intervene at an early stage to encourage improved attendance of individual learners.

Attendance Rewards

Research has shown that rewards are far more effective than punishment in motivating pupils.

The school will use various reward systems to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance. The school will continually raise the profile of attendance with pupils, parents and the wider community e.g. through newsletters and displays.

Any reward system must be meaningful to the children. Pupils will be made aware of prizes and other awards for good attendance and their views will be sought on the suitability of prizes and awards. During assembly each Monday, the class with the best attendance for the week will receive additional playtime and the attendance trophy. Pupils with 100% attendance will receive prizes at the end of each term and at the end of the year. Pupils with 100% each week will be entered into a raffle for a weekly prize. Letters will be sent to families with improved attendance.

Fixed Penalty Notices

For continued unauthorised absences and following the issue of a warning letter and a period of monitoring, the school can request that the LA issue a FPN in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct.

Fixed Penalty notices are one option among a number of different interventions available to promote better school attendance. Attendance at school is essential to improve children's educational prospects and to avoid putting them at risk of criminal or antisocial behaviour.

Headteachers are empowered to issue penalty notices and to authorise their deputy and assistant head to do the same. They may only issue penalty notice to parents/carers in respect of the irregular attendance of a child registered at their school.

Issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice

- A Fixed Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence;
- Fixed Penalty Notices will be restricted to one notice per parent of a pupil in an academic year;
- In cases where there is more than one poorly-attending pupil in a family, Notices may be issued for more than one child;
- There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent may receive a formal warning of a possible Fixed Penalty Notice

Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence within a rolling 12 week period. These do not need to be consecutive;
- Unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays taken in term time or delayed return from extended holidays;
- 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.

With regard to a request from a school for a Fixed Penalty Notice linked to a holiday related unauthorised absence, a LA will only issue a Notice where the school has provided the necessary paperwork and evidence. This paperwork should comprise:

- A copy of newsletter or letter sent to all parents during the current Academic year which clearly states that parents may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice for an un-authorised holiday in term time. (The LA will not need a hard copy of this newsletter/letter each time a school applies for an unauthorised holiday Fixed Penalty Notice, just on the first occasion each academic year);

- A copy of the holiday request form submitted by a parent, and a copy of the response sent to the parent by school. In the event of the holiday request is being denied the school's response should state the reason why the holiday is unauthorised and should again advise the parent that they may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice if they take their child out of school;
- A copy of the letter sent by school to the parent advising that the school has referred the matter to the LA and that a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued;
- Signed registration certificate from the Head Teacher or their nominated deputy confirming that non-attendance during the period was unauthorised.

Considerations and Assessment as to whether a Fixed Penalty Notice should be issued.

Head Teachers, their nominated deputies and the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will take into account the following when determining whether a Fixed Penalty Notice should be issued:

- Level of absence;
- Any Equalities considerations relating to the child or family (as listed in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan);
- Any Special Educational Needs and or Additional Learning Needs (ALN). LAs should consider whether attendance problems may be related to a pupil's ALN. Schools should be able to demonstrate that they have made appropriate provision for the pupil's needs, which may include consideration to support through School Action, School Action Plus or in collaboration with the LA, carry out a statutory assessment.
- History of the attendance issues and action taken;
- Welsh Government (WG) Guidance;
- Likely effectiveness of Fixed Penalty Notice as a tool for obtaining compliance;
- Level of parent engagement/cooperation;
- Any substantial adverse effect a fine will have on the welfare of the family

Procedure for Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices

The designated officer(s) within the EWS will be the only individuals permitted to issue Fixed Penalty Notices, which will ensure consistent and equitable delivery and allow schools to maintain good relationships with parents and ensure that they reinforce any other enforcement sanctions.

Fixed Penalty Notices will never be issued as an instant action, e.g. during a Truancy Sweep. This will enable officers to ensure that all evidential requirements are in place and limit the health and safety risks to individuals.

Responding to requests for the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notices

Following the advisory warning notice issued by the school or Police, parents have a period of 15 school days within which to respond. During this time, the pupil must have no unauthorised absence. This information can be included in the formal written warning letter, where one has been issued.

The EWS will respond to all requests from schools or Police within 10 school days of receipt of a request. When satisfied that all of the relevant criteria have been met the LA will then issue a fixed penalty notice.

Fixed Penalty Notices for an unauthorised holiday

Where the requested Fixed Penalty Notice is in response to a holiday related unauthorised absence or is in relation to an offence under section 108 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the formal warning letter and 15 day improvement period will not apply.

Absence related to discrimination

A pupil's absence from school may be due to bullying, which can take many forms and can be direct (either physical or verbal) or indirect, for example, ignoring a pupil or not talking to them. Some of this bullying may be discriminatory.

It is against the law for a school, governing body or the LA not to take action where this type of bullying takes place between pupils and as a school, we are required to monitor and report on discriminatory incidents each term. Should the reason for a pupil's absence be related to any of the above issues, we must take action to deal with the situation.

Return from an absence

The school will ensure that appropriate action is taken for all pupils on return from an absence. This will include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Education Other Than At School (EOTAS)

The provision where the pupil is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and chasing up non-attendance.

Arrangements are in place to identify pupils who are absent from providers of EOTAS, in order that the school where the pupil is registered can reflect any absences and apply the appropriate code.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence will be kept for an academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, that may require further investigation, then the notes will be retained in line with education retention schedule; only the Head Teacher or their representative can authorise an absence and that further information such as a letter from a GP or Consultant may be required to support reasons given for absence.

Retention of records

Attendance regulations stipulate that attendance records should be retained for at least three years; however it is good practice to extend this period in line with the education record retention schedule.

Inspection of registers

The LA will formally inspect registers on a regular basis, to ensure there is compliance with legislation. It should be noted that registers are legal documents and it is an offence not to maintain accurate records.

Attendance targets

Each year the Head Teacher and governing body, will set absence targets and submit to the Local Authority by no later than 31st December in every school year.*

**(Since the covid-19 crisis, no attendance targets have been set with the LA. For the academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24, schools were advised to set their own targets based on previous targets and the previous year's attendance. Therefore, a target of 93% for the academic year 2023-24 was agreed by the Governing Body)*

The school and Governing body will make use of the attendance data available from the LA and EAS when setting its targets.

Legislation and Guidance

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- (a) To his age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) To any special needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term 'parent' means natural parents and includes any person who has parental responsibility or has day to day care of the child.

Section 444 1, 1(a) and (ZA) contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school or alternative provision arranged by the Local Authority.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 set out the framework for the operation of the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme.

The Equalities Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

Registers and admission arrangements

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010;
- The Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

Attendance targets

- The Education (School Performance and Unauthorised Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

Guidance documents relating to attendance

- All Wales Child Protection Procedures;
- All Wales Missing Child;
- Caerphilly Local Authority, Policy and Guidance on Attendance;
- Keeping Learners safe;
- The All Wales Attendance Framework;
- Local Code of Conduct relating to the Fixed Penalty Notice scheme;
- Statutory Guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education (CME);
- Welsh Government guidance document 203/2016 Inclusion and Pupil Support;
- Welsh Government guidance document 215/2017: Supporting learners with healthcare needs;
- Welsh Government Guidance on penalty notices for regular non-attendance at school;
- Welsh Government Guidance on attendance codes (2010).

Further guidance on school attendance and support to learners, can be found by visiting:
<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>