

# Ysgol Bryn Onnen

## Attendance Policy



Ratified by Governing Body: 11.7.2023

Next review date: 1.7.2025

## **YSGOL BRYN ONNEN ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Mission statement**

Ysgol Bryn Onnen 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 systems 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), South East Wales Consortium (SEWC) and the WG.

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

### **Promoting attendance**

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and pupils.

We will ensure that our pupils 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.

The home school agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and carers and our expectations of what they will need to do to ensure pupils achieve good attendance.

## **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 time of year and overall attendance pattern of the pupil. It is good practice to invite parents to school to discuss any proposals, prior to an application being made.

The Head Teacher may only agree to an extended leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances include:

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

*Please read further information regarding **Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)** on Page 5.*

## **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 (attendance out of school). 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.

## **Lateness**

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 9 15 am. The registers will remain open for a maximum of 30 minutes, in accordance with WG guidance. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (code U) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

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

Afternoon registration will be at 12 30 pm (Years N – 2) 1 15 pm (years 3 and 4) 1 20 pm (years 5 and 6) and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (code U) unless there is an acceptable explanation.

Pupils arriving after the start of afternoon registration period will be coded as late.

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.

Torfaen EWS have devised a Punctuality Improvement Pathway for School to refer to.

### **First day absence**

School will endeavour to ascertain the specific reason for non- attendance as soon as possible on the first day of absence, after both morning and afternoon registration. This may include a telephone call or texting service. Once the specific information is received, the register will be amended to reflect the appropriate absence code (Appendix 1).

Priority will be given to children who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, e.g. those known to child protection/safeguarding services or are looked after (LAC).

The locality children services team will be notified of unexplained absences of more than two days of a pupil on the child protection register, or day one following a week-end period.

### **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.

### **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 should be retained in line with education retention schedule. Parents and carers are aware that 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.

### **Continuing and frequent absence**

Within the school it is the responsibility of the class teacher/registration tutor or attendance officer 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.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible, before a referral is made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS). This will involve inviting the parents or carers and the pupil into school for a meeting.

For unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in a rolling 12 week period (there are two sessions in a day, morning and afternoon) and following a period of monitoring, the school can request that the LA issue a FPN in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct.

### **Persistent absence**

Welsh Government defines persistent absence as pupils whose absence level is more than 20% (80% attendance). These pupils will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance.

The action plan will include engagement with relevant agencies that can support the pupil's attendance and could include the schools Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

In some circumstances, the school may request that the Education Welfare Service issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013.

These circumstances include:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A student has been late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve and sustain attendance.

Once a request has been the EWS will issue a warning notice will be issued to parents and attendance will be monitored for a 15 day period. If there are any further absences then an FPN will be issued.

Before issuing a FPN the EWS takes into account:

- the level of absence;
- any equalities considerations relating to the child or the family;
- any statement of Special Educational Needs;
- the history of attendance issues and action taken;
- Welsh Government guidance;
- the likely effectiveness of a FPN as a tool for obtaining compliance;
- the level of parental engagement/cooperation;
- any adverse effect a fine may have on the welfare of the family

### **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.

As a school, we are required to monitor and report on discriminatory incidents each term and if the reason for a pupil's absence is related to any of the above issues, must take action to deal with the situation.

### **A welcome back**

The school will welcome back 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.

### **Attendance awards**

The school will use an awards system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance.

Any reward system must be meaningful to the children. The timing of rewards needs to be taken into account to ensure that the children can make the link between their attendance and any rewards.

### **Categorisation of absence**

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.

## **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)

## **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.

## **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.

## **Register checks**

The LA will formally check the 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 school and governing body, will set absence targets and submit to the Local Authority by no later than 31<sup>st</sup> December in every school year.

A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and the Head Teacher or senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work. The school and Governing body will make use of the attendance data available from the SEWC and the LA when setting its targets.

## **Action Plan**

The school will produce an action plan to show how the school will set about achieving its attendance targets.

## **Cluster Co-operation**

Ysgol Bryn Onnen will work closely with other schools in the Gwynllyw Cluster to ensure consistency. The main aim of this co-operation will be to avoid anomalies raising such as where a sibling, or broader family member, is dealt with differently in regard to attendance. E.g. when siblings in primary and secondary school apply for term time holidays.



