



Faith School Cluster Attendance Policy

‘Success Starts at School’

December 2023

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Introduction

Our cluster is committed to ensuring that regular attendance at each school within the cluster is a priority which will in turn provide pupils with the best possible chances in life to succeed and to achieve their goals.

Regular school attendance is essential for all children and young people. Failure to regularly attend can increase the risk of leaving school without any qualifications, and can also increase the likelihood of pupils being drawn into criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Our cluster will endeavour to work with parents, pupils, the local authority and Central South Consortium Joint Education Services to ensure that all pupils receive an appropriate education and to attend school regularly.

This attendance policy reflects the Local Authority's Attendance Strategy.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure that attendance and punctuality remains a key focus for all, including governors, teachers, parents, pupils and partner agencies. We will strive to:

- offer a safe and friendly environment which welcomes children regardless of race, gender or ability.
- raise standards and ensure all pupils reach their full potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- ensure all stakeholders receive communication about information on the importance of regular school attendance.
- identify those pupils with irregular attendance at an early stage and to work with partner agencies to try and address any barriers that stop pupils from attending school regularly.
- keep accurate and up to date attendance data.
- ensure all pupils are safe, and for schools to follow the local authority's 'Children Missing Education' guidance.
- reward those pupils who have made significant progress in raising attendance levels.

This document is supported by the All Wales Attendance Framework.

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/pupilsupport/framework/?lang=en>

Legal Framework

The law outlining attendance is:

The Education Act 1996 which places a legal obligation on:

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

Section 7 of the above act states that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full-time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

Section 444 further states that:

'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'.

School Attendance Orders (SAO):

Under the Education Act 1996 section 437- 443 a School Attendance Order applies when a parent of compulsory school age fails to prove that the child is receiving a suitable education and where the authority believes the child should attend school. A School Attendance Order may be used to direct a parent to send their child to a specified school, and should be used when a pupil is not on roll at any school.

The Education (Penalty Notice) Wales Regulations 2013:

This legislation came into force in September 2014 and has given local authorities new powers to issue fixed penalty notices. (FPN). A code of conduct has been agreed by Bridgend County Borough Council on the issuing of the FPN which includes the following criteria:

- Minimum of 10 unauthorised absences in the current term which do not have to be consecutive.
- Minimum of 10 sessions of lateness after the close of registration.
- Parents/carers who chose to take their children out of school on holiday during term time without authorisation from the Head teacher for a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions.
- Pupil regularly coming into contact with the police during school hours without a justified reason.
- Parents/carers failing to engage with school/EWS but where prosecution has not been instigated.

The Head teacher will inform the parent by letter that a request for a fixed penalty notice will be completed and sent to the Lead Education Welfare Officer (Lead EWO) for the local authority. The Lead EWO will consider the request, taking into account levels of absence, level of parental engagement, any equality implications, history of attendance and also any statement of special educational needs.

A fixed penalty notice warning may be issued and a period of 15 days will be monitored for an immediate improvement. A warning may not be issued in respect of an unauthorised holiday in term time.

A penalty notice is £60 if paid within 28 days in receipt of the notice, increasing to £120 if not paid within 28 days. If not received by 42 days, then the local authority can prosecute parents for the child's absence.

For further information please see the BCBC website.

www.bridgend.gov.uk

Definitions

Compulsory school age – under section 8 of the Education Act 1996, children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday. The ends of the term dates are 31st March, 31st August and 31st December. A young person ceases to be compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.

'Parents' section 576 of the Education Act 1996 includes:

- All natural parents whether married or not.
- Any person who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a young person or child, and any person, who although not a natural parent has care of a child or young person.

Meanings:

'EWS' – Education Welfare Service

'EWO' – Education Welfare Officer

'CME' – Children missing education'

'CSCJES' – Central South Consortium Joint Education Service.

CTF - Common Transfer File – pupil file transferred to relevant school.

Attendance is everybody's concern and the school will expect all stakeholders to play a part in improving attendance. This will contain all having clear expectations and roles which include:

Role of Head teacher:

- To be responsible for overall management and implementation of this policy.
- To work closely with the school's governing body.
- To set attendance targets with the support of governors.
- To use discretion when receiving applications for holiday requests and to provide reasons to parents.
- To use discretion when deciding upon the appropriate action or support for pupils/families in relation to all other attendance concerns.
- Regular attendance reports will be shared and provided to governors.
- Work closely with the local authority's Lead EWO and nominated school EWO, and other support services.
- To notify the local authority when a 'child is missing education' and follow the local authority's CME procedures.
- Ensure policy is readily available for stakeholders including on the school, and website.

Governing Body:

- Approve the policy and amend if necessary.
 - Receive reports from the head teacher on a regular basis.
 - Attend meetings as and when required.
 - Ensure policy is shared with all relevant stakeholders.
- Lead governor for attendance is appointed.

Senior Leadership Team:

- Work with all staff responsible for attendance and punctuality.
- To look at attendance data on a weekly basis, linking in with schools EWO.
- Regularly check registers.
- Ensure all absences are recorded in line with the guidance of codes document including those unauthorised absence and no reasons provided.
- Regular and updated training on attendance for all relevant staff, using the LA ICT SIMS team.
- Raise issues of those staff not compliant with the completion of registers.
- Discuss any initiatives with all staff.

Heads of Year (applicable to Archbishop McGrath School):

- Ensure all pupil absences are recorded, and notes received.
- Registers are completed on a daily basis.
- Work closely with the schools attendance clerk.
- Work closely with the schools EWO, each providing valid attendance data, those not achieving the threshold of 92%. To attend set and pre-arranged meetings with the EWO.
- Contact parents/guardians of those pupils who have not attended and not provided reasons for absence on a daily basis.

- Truancy concerns are dealt with.
- To arrange letters and meetings for those parents whose children's attendance is posing a concern.
- To monitor patterns of irregular attendance.
- To provide rewards to those pupils with improved or excellent attendance.

Class Teacher/Form Tutors:

- To carry out the statutory role of completing attendance registers twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.
- Ensure absences are accounted for by way of a note provided by parents or via communication with the school office.
- Follow up unaccounted reasons for absence and concerns raised to the Head of year.
- To continue to raise the profile of attendance to all pupils.
- Contact attendance clerk/admin officer with any queries.

Pupils:

- Attend regularly and on time unless unwell or received an authorised absence.
- Bring to school a note explaining reasons for absence and give to class/form teacher.
- Inform teacher of planned absences.

Parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To notify the school if their child is unable to attend, on the first day of absence and every day thereafter.
- To keep the school updated on parents/guardians contact details, including mobile numbers and new addresses.
- To work with school and partner agencies to address any issues of irregular attendance of their children.
- To work with their child in relation to homework, not completing homework is not a reason for missing school.

Role of Attendance Clerk/admin officer:

- To contact parents on a daily basis to establish reasons for pupil's absence.
- To record absences daily, registers as and when required.
- To 'mop up' missing marks, providing reasons and inputting reasons on the red flag system on SIMS.
- To send text messages to those parents who haven't contacted school or by telephoning parents individually in order to establish reasons.
- To work closely with EWO and support staff in school.
- To work with SMT and Headteacher closely.
- To ensure transfer of CTF of pupils are completed in a timely manner and pupils are not removed from roll unnecessarily.

- To check messages, if necessary, either on the school's answerphone or text messaging system.

Keeping school registers

The school's register is a legal document and under The Education (pupil registration) (Wales) regulations 2010 the school is required to keep an accurate record of attendance. Registers need to be marked twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

Registers may be needed in a court of law if deemed appropriate.

Schools Information management system (SIMS) is used in all schools across BCBC to record all pupils attendance.

By the end of the school week the school's overall attendance registers will be completed and an overall attendance figure will be calculated by the school.

Types of absences

It is important for parents to understand the definition of the different types of absences. They are classed as unauthorised absence and authorised absence.

The schools head teacher can only decide on whether an absence should be classed in either one of these categories, parents cannot.

Absences maybe authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness.
- Religious observance.
- Medical/Dental appointments during school hours.
- Fixed term and permanent exclusions.
- Holiday agreed by the head teacher.

Examples of what are classified as unauthorised absence are the following, however they are not limited: Absences may be unauthorised for the following reasons:

- Truancy.
- Late after the close of registration.
- Staying at home for no reason – condoned absence.
- Going shopping.
- Birthdays.
- Holiday not agreed by the head teacher.

In addition there are several codes classed as a present mark which include the following:

- Late before the close of register.
- Educated off site, pupils attending vocational courses at college/pupils attending alternative provision agreed by school.

- Sporting activity.
- Educational visit.
- Traveller absence.
- Interview.
- Work experience.
- Where pupils are on roll at school and also at another education establishment.

Please see appendix 1 which includes a breakdown of codes set by Welsh Government.

Punctuality

Punctuality is a legal requirement and pupils must attend on time. Persistent lateness has a detrimental effect on a child's learning and disrupts other pupils within the class and throughout the school.

Those parents of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by the class teacher/Head of year/Senior Management team.

All pupils who are late must report to Reception in school and must enter through the main doors of the school.

Medical absences

Where a child is continually absent from school on the grounds of medical reasons, it will be necessary for the parent to provide medical evidence to school. This will be initiated by the school and the EWO which will result in the pupil and family receiving the appropriate support in assisting in attending school regularly. There may be times where a reintegration plan may be necessary which will be a partnership agreement between the family, pupil, EWO and school.

Holidays during term time

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school during the school term for a holiday. Under the Education (pupil registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, head teachers have discretion to authorise a holiday of up to 10 days during term time, over 10 days can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

All requests for holidays must be completed on the school's holiday request form and completed by the parents/guardians. (please see Appendix 2).

The head teacher will make the decision and may include the following contributory factors:

- Time of year.
- Length of time.
- Overall percentage of attendance.
- Impact on the child's learning.

School procedures

Parents are expected to contact school on the first day of absence and to provide reasons for their child's absence.

If parents fail to notify school, then the school will make every effort to contact the parents and also other persons listed as a point of contact. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no contact is made. Failure to receive any contact on the third day of absence may result in the involvement of the EWO.

As a school we have a duty to safeguard all our pupils and under the Education & Inspections Act 2006, requires the local authority to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children residing within BCBC who not receiving an education. For example, these may be pupils who have not attended school for an excessive amount of time without any contact or reason for the absence. The duty lies within the Local authority to investigate further. The Common transfer file will be sent to the forwarding school once being notified.

For further information please see
www.bridgend.gov.uk (CME document)

Schools Strategies to improve attendance

We aim that all pupils achieve 100% attendance, however there maybe instances where pupils unfortunately are unwell.

The school operates a 'Callio' process, which provides parents with information on the links between attendance and attainment. This shows which category the child's attendance falls into when attendance is as follows:

PURPLE	100%
GREEN	97% - 99%
AMBER	93% - 96%
RED	below 92%

NB: Where a child falls in between these categories they will be rounded up to the nearest whole figure.

Each parent will receive a 'Callio letter' on a termly basis informing them of which category their child is currently in. This ensures that early intervention is received by pupils and families who are in need. (please see appendix 3).

Pupil Involvement

Pupils may be nominated as councillors, mentors and mediators in order to assist other pupils in achieving improved attendance levels. Their work will provide a good example this has a positive impact with those pupils underachieving due to irregular attendance.

By ensuring pupils are involved in this process and giving them responsibilities, it will improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Schools Websites

The school's website will provide parents, pupils, governors and the public with all the relevant attendance information including the schools attendance policy, along with all other schools policies and procedures.

Schools Newsletters

This is another way of communicating with parents, and our school's newsletters are sent out on a regular basis. This includes informing parents and pupils where the school stands showing overall attendance figures.

Parents will need to check the attendance information on a regular basis and also check on school holiday dates and inset dates for the school. Please ensure that you check regularly to ensure there is no confusion as wrong dates are not reasons for children to be absent from school.

The School Environment

The school will provide a happy, welcoming and organised environment to ensure all pupils enjoy learning which results in good attendance. It is staffs' responsibility to ensure that the classroom and the school is a happy place.

Breakfast Club

Our school has the privilege of offering a breakfast to all our pupils. Breakfast club starts at 8.10am which is supervised by school staff. By children having this opportunity it allows them to have breakfast with friends and ensures they have had a meal at the start of the day which statistics shows helps the thinking process.

Staff Awareness

All staff are fully aware of the importance of regular school attendance, and pupils will regularly be made aware of this during the school day from staff.

Celebrating Attendance

Celebrating good attendance is important to us as a school, giving the pupils motivation, incentive, encouragement and a sense of self worth. These celebrations may be at whole school or class level as appropriate.

Transition Process

As we are all aware it is difficult at times to deal with change. We as a school appreciate that pupils find it hard to cope with the transition from year groups and also from primary to secondary school. Our school ensures that we have all staff involved in this process and taster days for all pupils are set.

Parents evening

Parent's evenings may offer the support of the EWO if parents need advice and guidance or additional support in trying to ensure the regular school attendance.

School Sanctions (Comprehensive)

Where pupils are continually absent from school we instigate pupil sanctions if there is no improvement. This may be in the form of detention either during lunch time or after school. Parents will be notified on each occasion.

Rewards

Our reward scheme includes pupils, and also local businesses within the community. Rewards can include the following (by way of example):

- Pupil Certificate.
- Badges/Pens
- Extra playtime.
- Class Trophy.
- 100% awards for the academic year for pupils.
- First In the queue for lunch.
- Books.

Further examples can include pupils being entered into a draw at the end of term or the end of an academic year for some of the following:

- Cinema tickets.
- Book vouchers.
- I-tunes voucher.
- Bike

Additional Attendance Strategies

Role of the Local Authority Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare service is a statutory service which supports schools in ensuring all pupils attend school regularly. We have a designated EWO who visits the school on a regular basis, depending on need. The EWO will meet with a senior member of staff within school and discusses those pupils who have attendance of below 92%.

The school, in a joint discussion will then refer the pupil to the EWO if necessary. Individual circumstances of each pupil will be considered. The EWO will then either send a letter home informing parents of your child's attendance, make a telephone call home, invite you into school or/and will conduct a home visit.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually, or otherwise, under the Education Act 1996. Where parents fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child or otherwise are committing an offence and the EWO will need to be informed.

It is unfortunate on occasions, but a punitive approach may be needed which may result in prosecution of parents. (Please see BCBC Non-school Attendance Enforcement Policy)

However, the EWS does not take this lightly and will endeavour to work and support parents, schools and pupils to improve attendance levels.

Additional Local Authority Support Services

The EWS sits within the early help team which comprises of a multi-disciplinary teams which are based in co-located areas across the county of Bridgend covering the North (CCYD), East (Civic Offices) and the West (Pyle life centre).

The early help team consists of a variety of support services including family support workers, family engagement officers, counsellors, and youth workers. The early help team is designed to support families and pupils where a need has been identified. All officers are professionally trained and work with families, schools and agencies to ensure all parents and pupils receive the best possible support to enable them to have better opportunities in life.

Parents can also self - refer into the service directly via:

www.earlyhelp@bridgend.gov.uk or alternatively telephone on

01656 815420

Role of School's -Improvement Partners/ Central South Consortium Joint Education Services.

Our school works closely with Central South Consortium which provides us with a nominated improvement partners who visits our school and advises and supports us in our school improvement process. Improvement partners and EWOs work closely with those schools needing additional support where attendance is a concern.

Good Practice Strategies

In addition to the strategies above, other initiatives may be conducted at any point.

Attendance Drives

EWOs across the county will work collaboratively with schools and early help teams to complete an attendance drive which will consist of visiting homes to parents of pupils who are absent from school on a particular day and whose attendance is below the agreed target. Members from the Early Help Team will assist the EWOs in their role. This is a proactive partnership approach in assisting schools, parents and pupils to identify issues with attendance and any other needs.

Attendance Panels

Attendance panels are seen as good practice in schools and involve school governors, member of senior staff, EWO, parent and on occasions include the pupil. Whilst the panel's aim is to address the attendance of pupils, it is not always in the best interest of the pupil to be out of class. If and when appropriate, these will be used.

Parents are invited into school to discuss their child's attendance, with a view for an 'action plan' to be completed and signed which will regularly be reviewed. Letters of invitation will be sent to parents in advance and parents are asked to notify school as to whether they will be attending or not. If they are not available to attend, then another letter will be sent. Failure to attend without notification may result in a visit or telephone call from the EWO.

Truancy Patrols

Truancy Patrols are initiated by the school's police liaisons officers and the EWS. Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 this gives the Police the power to remove truants on the day of the truancy patrol. Any child found unaccompanied by an adult can be taken back to school or to a designated place of safety.

Parents' and pupils' details are logged, along with the reasons for the pupil being out of school.

These patrols are held as and when needed throughout the academic year.

First Day contact

Whilst we as a school operate a first day contact, there may be times where the Education Welfare Officer will conduct this and contact parents of those pupils who are absent on a specified day. This is deemed as good practice and identifies those pupils who are regularly absent at an early stage with a view to referring to additional support services.

Data Collection

Our school's attendance data is continually being tracked and monitored electronically both on an individual pupil level and also as a whole school. This data is collated by the Lead EWO and shared amongst all schools across Bridgend on a termly basis.

Monitoring and Reporting

The school will regularly provide reports to the governing body, senior management and challenge advisors, and the local authority which will inform them of current attendance.

In addition, parents will also be notified through the school's regular communication channels.

Appendix 1

Code	Meaning	Statistical meaning
/\	Present at registration	Present
L	Late but arrived before register closed	Present
B	Educated off-site	Approved educational activity
D	Dual registered	Approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
V	Educational trip or visit	Approved educational activity
J	Interview	Approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based learning)	Approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances(not covered by another code)	Authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	Authorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
M	Medical/dental appointment	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
E	Exclusion	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
T	Traveller Absence	Authorised absence
N	No reason provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence(no explanation provided)	Unauthorised absence
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late arrival after the close of registration	Unauthorised absence

X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age	Not required to attend
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend

Appendix 2

Holiday in Term Time Request



Holiday in term time request – Faith School Cluster Schools

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of an annual family holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and, in law, must apply for permission in advance.

All Wales Attendance Framework (2011)

Section A

To be completed by the Parent/Carer at least 2 weeks in advance.

Name(s) of Child(ren)	Year Group	Class Teacher
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

Holiday dates: (including possibility of late flight arrivals if possible)

From: _____ to: _____

Destination: _____

(NB – This is for child protection reasons ensuring all our children are safeguarded)

Declaration:

I understand that this holiday request may be authorised or not authorised, and the headteacher will use his/her discretion in making the decision based on my child's circumstances. If the headteacher does not authorise this holiday, this may lead to a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice to the Local Authority Lead EWO which will be determined in line with the school's attendance policy. (Please ask for a copy at school or find one on the school's website)

'Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that schools will agree to family holidays during term time.'

All Wales Attendance Framework (2011)

Parent/Carer: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

Date: _____

Section B

To be completed by the head teacher within at least 1 week from the request.

Reasons for not authorising:

Reason for not authorising	Tick - applicable
1. Previous academic year's attendance – see attached certificate	
2. Number of absences this academic year	
3. Number of unauthorised late marks this academic year	
4. Previous involvement with EWO	
5. Other	

Explanation for the reason being other:

Reasons for authorising:

Reason for authorising	Tick - applicable
1. Previous/current academic year's attendance	
2. Compassionate reasons	
3. Other	

Total amount of sessions/days authorised/unauthorised (when request is not authorised).

	Sessions	Days
Total Number of Sessions / Days Requested		
Total authorised		
Total unauthorised		

I, as headteacher, authorise/ do not authorise (* delete) the following holiday request for the reasons specified above.

Please see attached attendance registration certificate.

Signed : _____ Date: _____

Headteacher

A copy will be retained on file for our records.

