

Aberdare Community School Ysgol Gymunedol Aberdâr



Attendance Policy

Date Adopted	30 th November 2022
Signature of Headteacher	<i>Carol Morgan</i>
Signature of Chair of Governors	<i>J. Radford</i>
Date to be reviewed	November 2023

Introduction

Our school actively promotes 100% attendance for all learners. Every child has a fundamental right to be educated. Parents and teachers, with the active support of the Education Welfare service, have a duty to ensure regular attendance and punctuality at school.

Good attendance and punctuality are crucial if learners are to benefit from education. Poor attendance has been identified as one of the major causes of failure to achieve a successful school career, and the reintegration of learners who are classed as long-term absentees is a priority issue for our school.

If a child is not in school he or she cannot learn and what is more important, the reverse is equally true: learners with excellent attendance are almost inevitably very successful learners.

Aims

- To enable maximum learner attendance through valuing high attendance rates
- To encourage learners to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by attending school regularly and punctually
- To recognise external factors that influence learner attendance and work in partnership with parents and educational Welfare Officer (AWO) to address difficulties
- To continually improve home/school links and communication systems that can be utilised wherever there is a concern about attendance, or indeed other issues
- To celebrate excellent attendance

Legal Framework

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 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”

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

- The pupil was absent with leave
- 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 which the pupil/parents belong
- The school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child’s home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the LA

Expectations

Governors will:

- Ensure the school has in place a whole school attendance policy.
- Receive annual and half-termly reports from the Attendance Lead in respect of attendance data, trends and comparisons.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy.

We expect learners will:

- attend school regularly, each student should strive for 100% attendance
- arrive on time, appropriately dressed in school uniform and prepared for the school day
- ensure that they arrive on time to their lessons throughout the school day
- through the pastoral system, tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly

We expect that all parents / carers will:

- encourage their son / daughter to attend school every day and on time, students should be inside the school gates by 8.35am for a prompt 8.45am start.
- telephone the school by 8.30am on the first day of absence if their child is ill, stating the full reason for their child's non-attendance and the likely date they will return to school. Keep the school informed of their child's progress throughout the period of absence.
- notify the school in advance of any medical/dental appointments with an appointment card if possible. Otherwise a letter must be provided retrospectively, stating the date, time and length of appointment, and the reason for the appointment. However, it is recommended that wherever possible appointments are made out of school hours.
- not arrange family holidays to take place during the school term unless there are exceptional circumstances. A holiday request form must be completed and sanctioned in advance of the holiday. Family holidays which take place during term time could incur a fixed penalty notice
- liaise with school and relevant staff if there are any problems / issues with their child that could affect their attendance

The school has the right to consider whether to accept the parent / carers position with regard to medical absence as there are occasions when parents report parentally condoned absence to the school as medical absence. If the school has concerns that the illness may not either be genuine or warrant the amount of absence accruing, the school may ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as a medical appointment card.

School will:

- record their son's/daughter's attendance regularly (every lesson), accurately and efficiently; this will be done via electronic registration using SIMs
- on the first day of absence contact the parent / carer using ClassCharts, where there are attendance concerns phone calls will be made in addition to the ClassChart message.
- deal appropriately with any issue which is reported to the school by the parent or carer, which might affect the student's attendance
- make all efforts to encourage good attendance throughout the school.

First Day Response Procedure

- Electronic registration **MUST** be completed immediately during morning registration, in the instance of assembly, registers must be completed by the form tutor electronically, using their I pads, outside the main hall while the learners are lined up.
- Learners signing in late should be updated on SIMS by 9.15a.m.
- Parents are requested to contact the school by 8.30am to inform of learner authorised absences.
- If no contact has been made by 9.15a.m. the absence will be marked initially as unauthorised.
- Attendance Officer will initiate First Day Response by messaging parents of unauthorised absentees using ClassCharts.
- Where there are attendance concerns, phone calls may be made in addition to the ClassCharts message by Progress Leaders/Attendance Officer.
- If the parent responds the code can be changed to authorised.
- Priority will be given to children who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable, e.g. those known to Children's Services or are looked after (CLA). The local authority's Attendance and Wellbeing Service will be notified of unexplained absences of five days or more, which will be reduced to only 24 hours if the learner is on the child protection register, who may conduct an unscheduled home visit to determine if the learner is safe and well.

Lateness

School actively discourages late arrival. It disrupts the smooth running of the school, affects learner progress and builds unacceptable habits for the learner's future. Registers are kept open for a limited period only. The school operates a late gate, to register late arrivals and if a learner has 2 or more lates in a week they are issued with an afterschool detention.

Internal Truancy Procedures

Missing lessons can have a serious effect on a learner's education. Lesson Monitor registers learners at every lesson and this quickly highlights learners not in their lessons. All staff members see it as their role to identify and find these learners to maximise their learning and to ensure their safety.

Truancy presents a wellbeing and safeguarding issue. Once truancy has been identified, immediate steps are taken to establish the safe whereabouts of the learner concerned. Where necessary this may involve other agencies. The truancy will then be fully investigated and followed up.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

- The school may authorise an absence if they are satisfied that the reasons given are genuine (e.g. illness or medical appointment), or that they fall within the categories specified in the attendance code list (Appendix 1). The school uses this list of codes to monitor and record attendance.
- Note that medical appointments count as an authorised absence and not as a medical 'present' mark.
- If no reason has been supplied and accepted for an absence or the learner is excessively late then the absence will be deemed to be unauthorised and the appropriate code used.
- The Attendance Officer provides each Progress Leader with a SIMS record of unauthorised absences for their year group on a daily basis. The Progress Leader initially tries to contact the parents/carers to establish the reason for the absence. If there are still unauthorised absences, then the Attendance Officer will contact parents via ClassCharts.
- It is the role of the Progress Leader to monitor unauthorised absence in conjunction with Attendance Officer and the AWS.
- Approved educational activity codes cover types of supervised educational activity undertaken off the school site but with the approval of the school and/or the LA, where the session has been supervised by an approved tutor.

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)

Promoting good attendance

Aberdare Community School will promote good attendance by:

- Holding fortnightly meetings between the Attendance Officer, Progress Leader and AWO to review each individual learner's attendance and to decide on the next stage of the referral process.
- Ensuring that attendance is high profile within the school, where it is discussed weekly in form class and in assemblies. Attendance is also a weekly feature on social media.
- First Day Response procedures and reward initiatives to celebrate good attendance.
- Close tracking of attendance and truancy on a lesson by lesson basis.

- The close tracking of attendance on a daily basis by Progress Leaders and Attendance Lead.
- Progress Leaders completing an attendance report every month which is discussed by the line manager in SLT meetings.
- Progress Leaders complete a self evaluation report on attendance every term.
- Progress Leaders carrying out daily phone calls to those learners whose attendance is causing a concern.
- A clear focus on attendance in every year groups line management meetings.
- Working closely with the AWS to undertake initiatives such as weekly WRVs (Wellbeing Response visits). Arranging joint meetings with parents whose children's attendance is causing a concern.
- Issuing half termly letters to parents informing them of their child's attendance and placing them into a RAG group according to their attendance, called our PACE (Punctuality and Attendance Counts Everyday) initiative.
- Collecting data on attendance for the whole school and by year group, on a daily and weekly basis weekly. Comparisons will be made on a half termly basis on whole school, year groups, gender, eFSM (free school meals) and ALN (additional learning needs). Comparisons will be analysed and strategies will be implemented accordingly.
- Utilising the Learning House as part of our graduated response for reintegrating learners back into school.

Continuing and frequent absence

In cases where a learner begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. This may involve inviting the parents or carers and the learner into school for a meeting. Every 2 weeks the issuing of attendance letters 1 and 2 are reviewed on a learner by learner basis. However, should this absence persist a referral will be made to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service when the attendance drops below 86% (currently the level for referral is 70% due to COVID) for the preceding six school weeks.

For unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in a school term, the local authority may issue a fixed penalty notice in accordance with the local authority's Code of Conduct. These are issued on a fortnightly basis.

Leave of absence/holidays in term time

Leave of absence during term time is actively discouraged as it negatively impacts on the learner's ability to engage with the full curriculum. Parents and carers do not have the automatic right to withdraw their children from school for a family holiday and will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a learner's potential achievement.

The school will consider any application for leave of absence; parents and carers must apply in advance for permission for their child to have leave of absence (four weeks minimum for a family holiday). Forms to request a leave of absence can be obtained from the school. The school will consider the request and respond in writing within 5 school days to inform the parent or carer whether the request has been

authorised. Subsequently, a parent or carer can make an informed decision whether they wish to pursue the absence in the knowledge of any potential consequences.

Parents and carers are advised that a fixed penalty notice may be issued by the local authority when permission for a holiday or leave of absence has not been authorised by the school. The local authority's Code of Conduct for Issuing Fixed Penalty Notices can be obtained from the school, the local authority's website or the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

Reintegration

If the learner has been absent for a considerable period of time, a reintegration plan will be introduced tailored to the needs of the individual and the learner may spend some time in our learning house after consultation with the Progress Leader.

Dual Registration

Learners who attend another school or unit will be dually registered at both venues. The enrolment status within the management information system (MIS) indicates the main place of education and which is subsidiary. An example would be a learner registered at ACS but attending EOTAS provision or a learner referral unit for certain days each week. The main school will be whichever the child attends for more than 50% of their time. The other will be the subsidiary.

The main school or provision where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the learner's attendance and chasing up non-attendance. The main school is responsible for liaising with the subsidiary school in order to identify learners who are absent for the sessions and mark the both registers accordingly.

Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance at School

The school may request the local authority to issue a fixed penalty notices where a parent/carers has failed to secure their child's regular attendance at school. A penalty notice can be requested against one of following five criteria:

- Where a learner has accrued 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absences in the current term (O codes);
- Where a learner has been persistently late on 10 or more occasions in the current term, arriving more than 30 minutes after the registration period (U codes);
- Where a parent(s)/carer(s) refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;
- Where a learner is repeatedly caught truanting in public places during school hours (Police can request a penalty notice be issued for this offence);
- Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised.

To comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, Aberdare Community School will operate in accordance with the local authority's Code of Conduct for fixed penalty notices for regular non-attendance at school. It

remains the discretion of the head teacher to authorise absences in line with The Education (Learner Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the local authority.

Each learner's absence will be considered on its own merits and if appropriate, a fixed penalty notice may be requested to encourage improved future attendance. If a learner's attendance is significantly low, a referral to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service may be considered.

Attendance Targets

Attendance target set by the school is listed below:

- 2022/23 Attendance target 88%

Retention of records

Computer registers are preserved as electronic back-ups copies. 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 local authority will formally check the school registers on a termly basis to ensure there is compliance with the national legislation. It should be noted that registers are legal documents and it is an offence not to maintain accurate records.

Roles and Responsibilities

ACS is aware that ensuring regular school attendance is a demanding area of work that depends on establishing and utilising close working relationships between parents, learners, schools, the local authority and other professionals who work with children.

A key part of any successful working relationship is a clear understanding of each person's role and responsibilities, and as such sets out to clarify the roles and responsibilities for those people engaged with tackling absence issues. (See Appendix 2)

Children Missing in Education

Although the duty is for local authorities to identify children and young people missing education residing in their area, it is recommended that those who have disappeared without a known destination should remain on the school register and a full investigation undertaken to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. In the first instance an enquiry via the phone will be made to the parent / carer. Once communication has been made the school will confirm whether or not the student has transferred to another school. Secure systems will be used to appropriately share personal information.

If an address for a child or young person has been provided and there has been no contact then the correct person at the authority will be contacted and a home visit shall be undertaken. The school follows the LA guidance on emergency wellbeing referrals, and completes the CME form if appropriate.

APPENDIX 1

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. learner 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)	Unauthorized 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 learners	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Learner not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to learners	Not counted in possible attendances

APPENDIX 2

Role of Attendance Lead

Daily

- Be the lead on whole school attendance.
- Liaise with the Attendance Officer regarding attendance issues.
- Hold daily wellbeing meetings with the pastoral team with a focus on attendance
- Discuss daily absence reports and registers with the Progress Leaders
- Ensure the accuracy of daily registers
- Promote good attendance through planned initiatives
- Ensure the consistency across the school with the approach to attendance
- Ensure the Progress Leaders are using the attendance tracker effectively

Weekly

- Distribute weekly attendance registers to Progress Leaders
- Ensure that WRVs are sent to the AWS on the school's allocated day.

Fortnightly

- Meet with the AWO for regular updates on learners who are referred to the AWS

Half Termly

- Produce half-termly data comparisons on whole school attendance and report to school's SLT and governors on attendance trends.

Termly

- Meet with the local authority who formally check the school registers to ensure there is compliance with the national legislation.

Role of Progress Leader

Daily

- Be the lead for the attendance within their year group.
- Discuss and promote good attendance with the whole year group by highlighting the link between good attendance and academic achievement.
- Monitor their year groups' progress towards the termly/yearly target.
- Ensure that registers are accurate and up to date for their year group.
- Work in collaboration with AWO/YEPs in terms of attendance of all learners within the year group.
- Monitor the lates for the year group, afterschool detention is issued if a learner has 2 or more lesson lates during the day and/or 2 or more AM/PM lates in a week.
- Contact learners whose attendance is causing a concern and those who have not provided a reason for absence.
- Monitor unauthorised absence in conjunction with Attendance Officer.

Weekly

- Ensure the Assistant Progress Leaders are promoting and monitoring reward initiatives.
- Ensure all form tutors receive the information and resources to fulfil their role in terms of attendance and that form tutors use attendance circles to promote attendance.
- Distribute weekly and cumulative attendance data to the form tutors and ensure the form tutors are using it correctly
- Ensure form teachers are promoting attendance reward initiatives within form time.
- Ensure that attendance is a focus in every assembly.
- Meet with parents of those learners whose attendance is causing a concern.
- Complete WRVs for their year group and follow up on the response from the AWS.

Fortnightly

- Attending fortnightly meetings between the Attendance Officer, Progress Leader and AWO to review each individual learner's attendance and to decide on the next stage of the referral process.
- Produce reports for their line manager on attendance on individual learners progress.
- To make referrals to YEPs for those learners identified in the fortnightly meetings above

Monthly

- Complete monthly report for line managers on their year group attendance.

Termly

- Produce an attendance self evaluation report for their year group for the half term and cumulative through the school year. To include the following:
 - Yearly and termly attendance target.
 - Progress made towards the targets.
 - Attendance data for each form class for each half term.
 - Progress update on learners whose attendance is below 80%.
 - Number of FPNs issued for the year group
 - Number of AWS referrals
 - Number of YEPs referrals
 - An overview of the progress made with the attendance stars.
 - The progress made with the 'attendance form'
 - Which learners are a concern?

Role Of Form Tutor

Daily

- Ensure electronic registration is completed immediately in morning registration.
- Promote good attendance and school initiatives and competitions.
- Report to the progress leader any concerns regarding attendance or reasons for low attendance.

Weekly

- Conduct weekly discussions with their form class.

Role of Attendance Officer

Daily

- Take messages off answer machine and input learners' illness onto SIMs. Establish if sickness is authorised or unauthorised (if learner has been issued with 2nd letter)
- If the learner is already involved with AWS then notify the relevant officer of the illness.
- AO will make first day contact for those learners who are not in school. See the protocol attached.
- Check accuracy of registers.
- AO is responsible for monitoring the late book and issuing the appropriate code on SIMs.
- AO adds any medical appointments to SIMs.
- AO with the Progress Leader to monitor learners who require a 1st or 2nd letter home for low attendance/lates.
- AO to refer on a daily basis learners who are below 86%.
- If a learner is on the CP register and absent with no contact AO makes an emergency referral immediately
- AO to monitor patterns in attendance.
- The AO to keep a file of updates from AWO visits.
- The AO to monitor holiday requests and issue FPNs to those parents whose holidays are not authorised.
- AO to print daily updates on the year groups attendance for the Progress Leaders, Attendance lead and year group line managers.
- Monitor unauthorised absence in conjunction with the Progress Leader and issue letters home to clarify reasons for unauthorised attendance.

Weekly

- Collate the WRVs and send to AWS by 10am on the morning of the initiative.

Every 2 Weeks

- AO meets with each Progress Leader once every 2 weeks in a timetabled lesson. Decisions are made in this meeting regarding referrals to AWS, YEPs, FPNs and meeting with parents.
- Every 2 weeks AO will monitor unauthorised attendance and late marks and FPNs are issued for those learners who meet the requirements.

