Attendance Policy

Policy Adopted by The Governing Body of Waldo Williams Primary School

Date for Review: December 2027

Policy

Rationale

Your child's success at our school is the most important part of their enjoyment and belief in their potential with us. To ensure your child has the best opportunity to benefit from the excellent teaching and learning at school, we need you as their parent / guardian and wider family, to work with us.
We need you at our parents evenings to find out how your child is doing at school – what their strengths are, and where we (you, and us as a school) need to support them.
Sadly those who do not attend regularly may fall behind in their learning leading to feelings of frustration and unhappiness. We seek to provide environments in which all young people can flourish as a member of a happy, caring and safe community. We believe that promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school and wider community.

All children should be at school, on time, every day that it is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Schools have a legal duty to publish attendance figures and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty and responsibility to ensure that their children attend school on a regular basis.

We know that all children are sometimes reluctant to attend school.

Any problems, which arise with attendance, are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend please do not cover up this absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. Come and talk to us, email us or ask for a meeting to see if there is an issue in school we can support with resolving, or signposting you for support – for example, with Teams Around the Family (TAF).

ESTYN states:
For secondary schools:
"There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Research shows that missing 17 days of school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a GCSE grade across all subjects. In the workplace unauthorised absences would not be accepted and we need to help our children and young people to prepare for the workplace"
ALL Schools
"The statistical link between attendance and attainment is strong. In Wales in 2014, over 92% of pupils with NO absence attained the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2. For pupils with attendance between 80 – 90%, this figure drops notably to 77% of pupils. Based on the statutory number of 190 school days per year, a pupil with 90% attendance will miss 19 days of schooling each year.
Primary Schools
Between entering primary school in the reception class to the end of primary education in Year 6, a pupil with an average attendance of 90% will miss 133 full days of school. This is well over half a year of learning."

By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves at least over 95 %, to achieve THEIR full potential.

Commitments (rights, responsibilities and roles)

- . School Attendance Policy has its basis in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe that all young people have the right to education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.

- All schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take attendance registers twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

- Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives efficient full-time education.

It is expected that this policy will be interpreted in light of any subsequent formal guidance from Welsh Government. Should any subsequent guidance significantly change the operation of any aspect of this policy the Headteacher acting in conjunction with the Chair of Governors shall publish as soon as is practicable on the school website any temporary arrangements pending the policy being reviewed by the Governing Body. It is expected that only those sections affected by any subsequent guidance will require temporary arrangements and that the remainder of the policy shall remain in force until formal review.

Should the Local Authority change its Code of Practice relating to penalty notices the same procedure applies as in the case of subsequent Welsh Government Guidance affecting any part of this policy. School staff and parents are able to view the current Code of Conduct arrangements on the Pembrokeshire County Council website.

Guidance on Penalty Notices for Non Regular Attendance at School 116/2013 issued September 2013

http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/130925-guidance-regular-non-attendance-en.pdf

1 Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance and Religious Observance 2016

http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/school-attendance-and-religious-festivals-guidance/?lang=en

The above list is non exhaustive.

1. Registration

1.1 To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils' attendance marks are registered electronically via the Capita School Information Management System (SIMS).

1.2 Pupils are registered at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.

1.3 Teachers are required to record present or absent against each pupil's name. Absence marks must be followed up with the appropriate code being added once the reason for absence has been ascertained (see below).

1.4 The individual schools, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government Guidance on School Attendance Codes 2010:

B Educated off-site	Approved Educational Activity
C Other authorised circumstance	Authorised Absence
D Dual-registered	Approved Educational Activity
E Excluded	Authorised Absence
F Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G Family holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
H Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I Illness	Authorised Absence
J Interview	Approved Educational Activity
L Late (before registers close)	Present
M Medical appointment	Authorised absence
N No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised Absence
P Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
R Religious observance	Authorised Absence
S Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
U Late after registers close	Unauthorised Absence
V Educational Visit or Trip	Approved Educational Activity
W Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
Y Partial or enforced closure	Attendance not required
X Non-compulsory school age abs	Attendance not required
# School closed to all pupils	Attendance
Z Pupils not on role	Attendance not required

2. Absence, lateness and medical appointments

2.1 Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone at the beginning of the first day of their child's absence. Individual schools monitor telephone calls each morning.

2.2 Should a pupil be absent from school without explanation, the school will contact home / parent / guardian / contacts (telephone, text, etc.) where a request will be sent to parents asking them to make contact with the school as a safeguarding precaution, to allow parents to indicate the reason for absence, and (where applicable) to provide an indication of when their child will be able to return to school. Unless an indication in terms of length of time, is given, parents are expected to inform the school at the beginning of each subsequent day of absence unless other arrangements have been mutually agreed.

2.3 Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking the reason for absence.

2.4 If a child arrives late to school, pupils / parents must either ensure that they sign in to a 'late book' contained in the reception / attendance room, stating a reason for being late, or make contact with the school. If pupils are required to leave school within the day, prior notice must be given to the school (agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher).
Lateness: Lateness, especially if persistent should be treated in the same way as irregular attendance. Parents can be prosecuted if the issue of persistent lateness is not resolved. Lateness can be as damaging to a pupil's educational career as persistent absence can impact upon learning.

2.6 Whenever possible medical appointments should be booked outside of the school day. If appointments are not possible outside of the school day, then proof of the appointment may be required, and pupils should return to school afterwards unless there is a valid medical reason given. Where an absence is authorised, the school will use the appropriate code to record the absence. If a pupil is feeling unwell during the school day, then they will be sent to the school medical area where they will be treated appropriately. At this point, a decision will be made as to whether the pupil should be sent home or not.

3. Authorisation of absence (including holidays)

3.1 Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school. All schools will exercise caution in the authorisation of absence and parents must seek to provide the school with a full picture of the reasons and in some circumstances documentary evidence relating to the reason for the request. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 states that all absences are to be treated as unauthorised until schools have agreed that a satisfactory explanation has been given which should normally be within one day. If a reason is accepted it needs to be recorded on the SIMs system using the correct code.

The Governing Body have adopted a policy that states, if attendance is 95% or more on the first day of a holiday, the holiday will be authorised. The school will never authorise more than 10 days. We believe this offers flexibility with taking holidays whilst maintaining good attendance.

3.2 The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. **Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance.** The headteacher will only authorise family holidays at their discretion where parents are able to demonstrate that in the individual circumstances warrant it being authorised.

The fundamental principle underlying this policy is that schools are open for 190 days a year. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Parents are to be actively encouraged to take time off and book holidays outside of term time as it is only with parental cooperation will it be possible to achieve and maintain a high level of attendance and attainment.

3.3 When assessing requests for a holiday, the Headteacher will consider:

- The age of the child
- The time of year of the proposed trip;
- The length and purpose of the time off;
- Any impact on continuity of learning;
- Overall attendance pattern;
- The stage of education
- The child's progress
- Any guidance issued by Welsh Government

Balanced with

- The circumstances of the family
- The wishes and views of the parents; and
- The purpose of the holiday

The above list is not exhaustive and the Headteacher is entitled to take into account other factors which they feel to be relevant to the exercise of their discretion.

3.4 Should the holiday take the total absence due to holidays for the year to being over 10 days then only in **exceptional circumstances** should this holiday be granted. The test of **exceptional circumstances** applies only to holidays which accumulate over the course of the year to more than 10 days. Holidays which accumulate to 10 days or less throughout the year need to be considered in accordance with paragraph 3.3 above.

3.6 Parents should not expect and head teachers should not assume that because a term time absence is agreed one year that it will be authorised the next. As children become older and progress through the stages of education there will

inevitably be different circumstances applicable as they will be learning new topics and studying for a different key stage. Likewise, it should also not be assumed that if there is an extended family / friends holiday where the children attend different schools that if the term time absence is agreed in one school that the other school will also agree the absence. The exercise of discretion lies solely with the individual Headteacher of any particular school and the circumstances and attendance records of individual children will inevitably differ.

3.7 Heateachers also have the discretion to authorise only part of a term time absence. If the request is for a 10 day term time absence the head teacher can authorise 5 days and inform the parent that any days taken beyond the 5 days will be unauthorised.

3.8 For non-holiday related requests for absence the Headteacher should consider the Welsh Government School Attendance Codes Guidance 2010.

4. Early Intervention

4.1 Waldo Williams Primary School recognises the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by text message, social media, leaflets, parents' evenings, school reports and the school website.

4.2 When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. Where possible work will be provided to ensure that the pupil can keep as up to date as possible with the curriculum.

4.3 The EWO, in conjunction with all the schools in the cluster, will ensure that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.

Head teachers and school staff are encouraged to try new strategies and continually seek to try and promote positive attendance.

How we aim to reduce absence and improve continuity of learning for all

4.6 Our school will always seek to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents / carers. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit from parents the support deemed necessary to ensure pupils attend school, parents may receive letters which:

- Request reasons for their child's absence;
- Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
- Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
- Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their support in getting their child to school on time;
- Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence and the consequences of this in relation to penalty notices and involvement of EWS (Education Welfare Service);
- Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
- Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice;
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

4.7 In some circumstances following warning letters, the school may seek further advice and recommendation from EWS or request that the EWS issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. The school should warn a parent when their child's attendance is approaching the criteria for a penalty notice.

4.8 The criteria for issuing a penalty notice is set by the Local Authority.

The criterion for considering a penalty notice is currently as follows:

When a pupil has a minimum of 10 sessions (five school days) that have been lost due to unauthorised absences during the current term and this brings the pupil's overall attendance to below 90% in the school year to date (these absences do not have to be consecutive).

*unauthorised absences include:-
-unauthorised non-attendance at school;
-unauthorised holidays in term-time; and
-unauthorised late arrival after registration has closed.

Should the Local Authority alter the criteria for issuing a penalty notice the newly published code of conduct will take precedence over the criteria set out in this paragraph.

4.9 When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. A referral might be made when, for example:

- A pattern of irregular unauthorised attendance has developed;
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established with the pupil attendance dropping to below 85% with unauthorised absences.
- There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance; or
- A pattern of truancy is persisting.

4.10 Our school does liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

4.11 Before considering whether to make a referral to the local authority, action should be taken by the school to improve a pupil's attendance and investigate and address any underlying cause of problems, such as:

- bullying
- experience of racism
- caring responsibilities
- ill health
- unmet SEN, or unidentified ALN or disability

5. Role of the Education Welfare Service

5.1 The Headteacher and senior staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records through SIMS for each pupil.

5.2 The Local Authority Education Welfare Officer meets regularly with every school in the cluster to discuss individual cases of absenteeism, truancy or lateness and reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions to date. Decisions are taken at this time as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral to the EWS. As a result of the EWO's overview of the whole cluster, the EWO will strive to promote consistency when working with a family that might have children in more than one cluster school.

5.3 The school and EWO should make use of attendance data to try and identify trends or problems and to evaluate the effectiveness of attendance strategies.

6. School Targets

6.1 Parents are informed of their child's attendance regularly.

6.2 The target for the school is set annually by Governors and reported in their annual report to parents.

6.3 Attendance is reported to governors in every termly meeting via the head teacher report.

Children missing in Education (CME)

If there are concerns that the pupil's family have moved out of the area, without leaving a forwarding address/name of new school, the school must follow the Local Authority Children Missing Education (CME) protocol and make every effort to find the pupil by all means necessary before forwarding the case to the EWS for further tracking.

