



**BELONG, *believe*, ACHIEVE**  
**PERTHYN, CREDU, LLWYDDO**

**The Willows Way**

# Attendance

## Policy

## **Introduction**

Willows High is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence.

For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **Why is regular attendance so important?**

### **Learning**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

### **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

## **Promoting Regular Attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance using rewards and by celebrating pupil achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

## **The law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- to age, ability and aptitude and
- to any special educational needs he/ she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'

## **The law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED.

This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

This type of absence can lead to the Education Welfare Service using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absences thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents will be made known to the Education Welfare Officer.

### **Absence Procedures:**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by using the facility on the Classcharts Parent app;

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or message you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officers and/or Head of Year if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service if attendance moves below 75%.

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we

always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Positive Intervention**

Each Half-Term the Attendance Officers with the Head of Years will review attendance of pupils in their care and categorise each child in the school according to the following thresholds.

#### **Stage 1: Pupils with attendance at, or above, 95%**

These pupils will receive rewards on a half termly basis from their Head of Year.

### **Pre-referral Action –**

The Five Stages Intervention will begin when a pupil's absence at school falls below 95%. The following are actions at each threshold:

#### **Stage 2: Pupils below 95% (equivalent to one session missed per fortnight)**

- Attendance Officers will liaise with the parent to supporting removing any barriers to attending.
- Constant reinforcement by Form Teacher and Head of Year
- Attendance discussed at parent evening
- Attendance reviewed weekly by Attendance Officer and Head of Year.
- Attendance Targets set and reviewed every half term.
- If no significant improvement is made then a letter of concern letter will be sent.

#### **Stage 3: Pupils with deteriorating attendance to 86% (equivalent to 1.5 sessions missed per week the Persistent Absence (PA) threshold)**

- The Attendance Officers will contact the parents regarding PA.
- The Attendance Officers will monitor PA pupils on a weekly basis.
- The Attendance Officers carry out an unannounced parental visit to discuss strategies to improve attendance.
- If there is no significant improvement the Attendance Officers will arrange an announced parental visit to discuss strategies to improve attendance.
- If no significant improvement is made, then a second letter of concern letter will be sent warning of a referral to the Education Welfare Service.
- If no significant improvement is made, then parents will be invited to attend an attendance meeting to offer support in improving pupil attendance with the Head of Year and / or SLT ALNCO
- If no significant improvement is made, then the Attendance Officers will make a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

#### **Stage 4: Pupils where there is no improvement after stage 3 intervention**

- The Attendance Officers will ensure that referral has been made to Education Welfare Officer who will plan strategy and intervention.

#### **Stage 5: Pupils continuing to deteriorate.**

- Education Welfare Officer will begin legal proceedings.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices:**

In some circumstances, the Educational Welfare Service may issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. A warning letter will first be sent if:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A child has been late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve attendance;
- The police have regularly found a pupil to be absent from school without an acceptable reason.

## Actions to support the above

### **Headteacher**

- Set challenging targets to meet national averages. Ensure strategy is devised to make solid progress towards them.
- Appoint the Attendance Lead at a reasonably senior level. Provide sufficient time for Attendance Lead to supervise attendance management and to become involved with poor attenders. Also ensure there is sufficient time to analyse data, liaise with teachers and Local Authority officers. Give the Attendance Lead the full responsibility to lead on whole school policy and strategy.
- Take a personal interest in attendance and support intervention with the poorest attenders.
- Report statistics to the Governing Body and as part of the termly report to governors.

### **Attendance Lead**

- Work with the Head teacher to agree the school attendance targets.
- Monitor attendance weekly and evaluate progress towards the targets.
- Keep the Governing Body informed and seek their advice and support.
- Ensure there is a clear attendance policy, showing who will do what and at what threshold.
- Keep attendance at the forefront of each member of staff's mind. Convince all staff that attendance is their responsibility.
- Promote regular attendance, by making use of reward systems, assemblies, parents' evenings, performance reviews, etc.
- Supervise administrative staff. Ensure registers are checked daily and that the required action at each threshold level is taken at the earliest moment possible.
- Revise strategy to address issues with each individual pupil or family.

### **Head of Year**

The Head of Year has overall responsibility for the monitoring of the quality of the total school experience received by the children in their year group.

The Head of Year is a key figure in attendance. They will receive data on attendance from the Attendance Officers, registers, reports from subject teachers, tutors and lesson checks and their own observations.

The Head of Year monitors cases of unexplained/ unjustified absence and details of internal truancy from Attendance Officers, Subject Teachers, Form Tutors and lesson checks and will also need to ensure swift follow up.

The Head of Year needs to monitor attendance patterns for their pupils and explore ways of reinforcing regular, high attendance.

The Head of Year must engage in regular meetings with Attendance Officers, Subject Teachers and Form Tutors to discuss attendance issues and exchange information.

They will:

- Promote regular attendance at registration, assemblies etc. Make 100% the expectation.
- Not accept poor attendance.
- Promote regular attendance through rewards and other encouragement. Make it your business and make it clear that poor or erratic attendance is not expected.
- Analyse attendance data for their year group, and co-ordinate the responses and interventions from Form Tutors.
- Make a personal connection with parents and pupils who have regular unauthorised absence, or patterns of irregular attendance.
- Identify pupils who are likely to jeopardise the school's performance and plan early intervention to avoid bad habits being established.
- Ensure the Attendance Officers are informed of concerns over attendance.
- Following absence, do their best to provide catch-up opportunities so absentees do not fall behind.
- Where appropriate, ask parents to play a part in reinforcing missed learning.

## **Form Tutor**

The Tutor is the key person in the pastoral responses of the school. Any policy to improve attendance depends largely on the commitment of Tutors for its effectiveness.

- The Tutor must know pupils in their Tutor Group and build relationships with them so that support and guidance can be offered, and will be sought, in matters related to learning and personal and social development.
- Tutors play a key role in promoting the good attendance and punctuality of their group. The relationship with pupils needs to demonstrate concern about whether or not their pupils are benefiting from school.
- Tutors are responsible for maintaining registers accurately, and in accordance with agreed procedures and returning absence sheets promptly to the office for use by others.
- Where regular patterns of absence show up, e.g. every Wednesday p.m., Tutors should investigate these and discuss with the Attendance Officer and Head of Year.
- Tutors need to be alert to absence being condoned for trivial reasons.
- The Tutor needs to be sympathetic and assist with re-entry of absentees and find ways of re-enforcing renewed attendance.
- Tutors should discuss positive attendance with their Tutor Group and set targets for and with the class. Successes should be referred to the Heads of Year and above.
- Tutors should display attendance charts in their Tutor Group bases and be involved in the rewards system

## **Attendance Officers:**

- Follow the school's procedures for first day calling. If no explanation has been received by the time registers close, seek one.
- Be prepared to be assertive. Parents must explain absence. Explanations need to be plausible.
- Do not show sympathy over absence unless you are convinced it is genuine.
- Issue attendance letters where required. Make sure they have the effect intended. Do not tolerate a lack of response. Seek advice as required.
- Provide data on weekly basis to Class Teachers and the school's Attendance Lead.
- Hold regular discussions with the Heads of Year. Ensure the system works. If it does not, come up with suggestions to improve it.
- Make sure the Heads of Year and/or the SLT line manager know about families where bad habits are forming. Make sure action is taken to break bad habits at the earliest opportunity.
- Assist the Attendance Lead and others in collating data for inclusion in reports, attendance returns, etc.
- Check and file all absence notes that are received and ensure that details are reflected appropriately through categorisation of absence in the registers.
- Pass messages from parents efficiently to the class teacher or other relevant member of staff.

## **The Education Welfare Officer (EWO):**

- EWOs link between home and school concerning attendance issues, e.g. following up referrals.
- EWOs liaise with other professionals such as Social Services to improve attendance.
- EWOs inspect registers and compile and collate statistics on attendance data.
- EWOs attend court and compile court reports on attendance related matters.
- EWOs should become involved in forums set up for pupils to discuss issues related to their attendance.
- EWOs will liaise regularly with Attendance Officers at meetings on attendance

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer

They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as

Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Education Welfare Service.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the SAO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their Class Teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 9:00am and we expect a pupil to be in class at that time.
- Registers are marked by 9:30am and a pupil will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 10.00am the registers will be closed.
- If a pupil is late, they will be issued with a same day at home detention task, parents will be informed.
- More than 10 lates in any one term could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

### **Holidays In Term Time:**

Taking holidays in term time will affect a pupil's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

- Remember that any savings parents think they may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to a child's education.
- There is no entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.
- The Local Authority has changed its policy towards term-time holidays and as a result any period of leave taken during school time will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Fixed Penalty Notice.