

GEORGE STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy



Together We Live, Learn and Value

Date: December 2023

Please note. Reference to ‘parent’ in this document refers to anyone who has primary responsibility for the care of any pupil (including foster carers).

Introduction

Purpose:

At George Street Primary we believe that regular school attendance is extremely important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the learning opportunities available to them. Children who do not attend school regularly are at risk of being unable to fulfill their potential in school as well as in their future lives.

Staff and Governors see promoting good attendance as a key priority. We set targets for whole school improvement and establish personal improvement action plans where necessary.

George Street Primary will investigate reasons for absences. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible.

Aim(s):

- To improve attendance to at least 95% for all pupils
- To develop a consistent rewards system to promote good attendance
- To develop a consistent approach to pupils and families who do not demonstrate positive attendance patterns.

Consultation:

This policy has been created from guidance from the LA and will be shared with pupils, parents, staff and governors.

Sources and references:

LA School Attendance Strategy 2022 – 2024

Staff responsible for whole school attendance:

Mr Brasington (Headteacher – currently on secondment)

Mrs Manley (Acting Headteacher)

Mrs Mollaney (Family Liaison Officer)

Mrs Morgan (Senior Support Officer)

Educational Welfare Officer – Mrs Hannah Kethro-Moore (Local Authority)

Procedures and practice

Section 1: The law:

The law defines compulsory school age as between 5 and 16 years old.

Parents

Parents must secure full-time education for children of compulsory school age. The education must be suited to the child's age, aptitude and ability, and to any special needs the child has. Parents can secure education for their child by registering the child with a school or in some other way. A child who is registered with a school must attend regularly and punctually.

The Local Authority

As a local authority (LA), Torfaen County Borough Council must ensure that:

- There are enough school places for the children in its area
- Parents secure full-time education for their children

School

Schools must:

- Record attendance at the start of the school day and during the afternoon on a paper or computer register
- Tell the LA if:
 - if a pupil fails to attend regularly
 - a pupil is absent for 10 or more school days in a row. The school should tell the LA why the pupil is absent if it knows.
- Record in the register whether absence is authorised or unauthorised
- Publish the percentage and number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the governor's annual report and prospectus
- Comment on any unauthorised absence in pupils' annual reports
- Allow the Local Authority to inspect the register during school hours.

Legislation

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age (5-16) receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise (the parent can choose to educate their child at home).

If it appears to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order under Section 437 of the Education Act 1996.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him to attend (Education Act 1996, Section 444(1A) as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This offence requires proof that the parent knew of their child's non-attendance and failed to act.

Under this aggravated offence a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court and conviction can lead to a custodial sentence.

Section 444(ZA) of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by section 116 of the Education Act 2005) will extend the circumstances in which a parent can be prosecuted for failing to ensure that a child for whom he is responsible attends regularly to include alternative provision that has been made for the child. An LA must consider applying for an Education Supervision Order (ESO) before prosecuting a parent (Children Act 1989, Section 36). An LA may apply for an ESO instead of or as well as prosecuting the parent.

For further details please see the following documents:

- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education Act 2005
- Children Act 1989
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The special position of Traveller families is also recognised in law (section 444(6), Education Act 1996). Traveller parents are protected from conviction if the parent can demonstrate that:

- He or she is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as requires travel from place to place;
- The child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits;
- The child, where aged six or over, has attended school for at least 200 sessions (half days) during the preceding twelve months.

Section 2

Completing the electronic register

Teachers must:

- Complete the register immediately at the start of each session.
- Not mark a pupil present unless the pupil is in the room when they call the register
- Not leave any spaces in the register
- Make any changes to the register clearly, distinguishing between the original entry and the correction. Both the original entry and any correction must be preserved by ensuring the register is saved within SIMS.
- Not allow pupils to mark the register
- Mark pupils who are present / (am) and \ (pm)
- Mark pupils who are absent O if in school's view no satisfactory explanation is provided.
- Mark pupils who arrive late but before the register is closed L

Section 3

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Authorised absence:

Only the school can authorise an absence. School will not automatically class an absence as authorised because it is covered by a note from the parent.

It is often the case that children will have time off school for very genuine reasons which will always be authorised according to the Welsh Assembly Guidance – see appendix 4

Unauthorised absence:

Unauthorised absences can be defined as absence from school for any period because of a premeditated or spontaneous act by the pupil or parent or both. This includes parentally condoned absence.

Parentally condoned absences include absences when:

- a parent is ill
- a parent is inappropriately using his/her own circumstances to justify non-attendance of a pupil
- a parent is using the child as a childminder
- a pupil is supporting other members of the family
- work patterns, for example shift work, make it difficult for the family to ensure the child attend school
- a parent wants company
- a parent gives in to the pupil who wants to stay at home
- it is the pupil's birthday
- a parent does not care whether the pupil attends school
- a parent has taken the pupil shopping
- a parent cannot control the pupil
- a parent has taken the pupil to the hairdresser
- a parent is hostile towards the school or towards education in general
- a parent distrusts authority
- a parent is using the pupil as an interpreter

Lateness

You must set a point at which you close the class register. The Welsh Assembly Government and Torfaen recommend this is set at 30 minutes after the start of school.

If any child arrives after this point, you must count it as an unauthorised absence.

If a child is frequently late, the parent may be failing to ensure that the child is receiving full-time education. We may prosecute the parent under the Education Act 1996, section 444.

Holiday Absences

At George Street Primary, school will not authorise absences for family holidays during term time, based on advice by the Local Authority. Parents are encouraged not to take their children on holiday during term time. A two week holiday during term time means that a child can only attain a maximum of 94.7% attendance in any year, even if they have no other absences. Parents have no right to demand that absences are authorised.

Where a parent requests permission to take their child on holiday during school term this will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Parents will need to request a holiday application form and will receive a response form the school advising whether or not the holiday can be authorised. If the parent takes their child regardless of permission not being granted then the pupil's absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be discussed with the Education Welfare Service who make take further action.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The school will use fixed penalty notices (FPNs), in accordance with the regional fixed penalty guidance.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence during the current academic year. These do not need to be consecutive;
- Unauthorised absences of at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to holidays in term time or delayed return from extended holidays; or
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed, in the current term. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of late arrival;
- Truancy, where the child has come to the attention of the Police or public during school hours for being absent from school, without an acceptable reason.

Section 4

Recording, monitoring and target setting

Recording attendance

Recording information about attendance accurately and effectively as a school will allow us to:

- report to parents; report to governors; provide the LA with the information it needs to monitor your performance; provide the information required by WG; find out how you can improve attendance; set targets for individual pupils, teaching groups, year groups and the school.

Monitoring attendance

To allow us as a school to monitor attendance effectively, we will:

- use first response system and absent text messages/phone calls
- use the same registration procedures throughout your school
- use the codes prescribed by WAG
- keep track of pupils during the day, ensure that all classes have clearly visible the number of pupils present and on roll at start of each session.
- have a system, possibly spot checks, to tackle truancy after registration
- identify an office member to carry out this role : the headteacher
- provide clear information to the EWS so that it can detect patterns of absence quickly and intervene early

Setting targets

As a school we set targets for improving attendance every year and for the forthcoming two years. Our current attendance targets are as follows.

The Education (School Performance and Unauthorised Absence Targets) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006 require the governing bodies of every maintained school (other than a special school established in a hospital) to set targets no later than the 31 December in every school year, and must submit to the local education authority. These targets refer to the level to which the absence rate of the pupils at the school is to be reduced.

Where a governing body has previously set absence targets under these regulations the following will apply:

- A final target for the following school year, being the reviewed target set in the previous school year but revised if the governing body deem it necessary to do so.
- A reviewed target for the school year next but one, being the provisional target set in the previous school year but revised if the governing body deem it necessary to do so.
- A provisional target for the school year next but two.

Where the LA is not satisfied with any target submitted by a governing body as stated above, it must give notice to the governing body of that fact, and the governing body must submit a revised target within 21 days of receipt of such a notice.

Where the LA is not satisfied with the revised target submitted by the governing body it must set the target.

A final absence target set by a governing body must not be modified by the governing body without the agreement of the LA.

Reporting an Absence

In the first instance a telephone call should be made to the school **by 10 am** on the first day of absence, this may need to be followed by a letter of explanation on the child's return. Personal contact with the child's teacher or school clerk will also be acceptable in explaining the absence, however, messages passed to staff on door duty is not an acceptable means of reporting an absence formally and must be followed up by a phone call to the school office. All such explanations relayed over the telephone or by personal contact received by the clerk or class teacher will be logged and entered in the class register by the clerk.

When reporting an absence, a parent will be asked to indicate how many days of absence will be expected and the nature of the child's reason for absence. If absence then exceeds the period first indicated, parents are required to telephone the school again to indicate the approximate length of the continuing absence.

First Day Response System

It is the parents' responsibility to report a child's absence before 10am on the first day of non-attendance. This is of vital importance if we are to ensure the safety of all our pupils.

If no contact has been made with the school by 10am, our First Day Response system is activated as follows:

- Following closure of registration at 9:30 am, a list of absent pupils is collated by the school support officer who will then attempt to contact parents and carers by telephone to establish the reason for absence. This list should be cross checked with the list of already accounted for absences, e.g. known sickness, authorised holidays, /exclusions.
- This process is started after the 10 am deadline for parents and carers to contact the school. An attempt is then made to contact the parent. An unanswered phone will be followed by with a text message and an online form for parents to complete. If the form is not completed during the morning a phone will take place during the afternoon session.
- If a second attempt is unsuccessful, the absence will be recorded using 'N' meaning 'no reason yet given for absence' against the child's name on the electronic register. Where appropriate the school support officer will make a note on the register that an attempt was made to contact the parent but also continue to obtain a reason for the absence.
- A particular focus on vulnerable groups such as those on the child protection register or those who are Children Looked After (CLA) is essential. The school support officer will have access to a list of **vulnerable pupils** who will be prioritised for a First Day response if they do not attend school with no reason given for their absence. This information needs to be passed onto the designated person(s) for attendance who is the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and in her absence the Headteacher. The FLO will attempt a home visit and will then contact

the relevant agency e.g. Social Services, Education Welfare Service (EWS) if no contact has been made with the parent/carer by the end of the first day of absence.

- First Day Response actions will be recorded on SIMS registration documents using the red flag system.
- In the absence of the school support officer, the First Day Response system will still go ahead by the FLO.

Continued Absence from School (all pupils excluding vulnerable pupils)

School Based Actions:

- Where the pupil's home cannot be contacted by telephone, after 2 days of unexplained absence a letter will be sent requesting an explanation.
- If the first letter elicits no response from the parents/carers, further contact will be made on day 4 day, by telephone or letter. The school support officer will then notify the FLO of this child's continuing absence. It may be necessary at this time to alert the EWS.
- Where specific problems are encountered, e.g. language, we will consider involving appropriate services to assist e.g GEMMS
- At this stage, the FLO will address the attendance pattern of the pupil. Plans for dealing with the problem should be devised with the involvement of parents/carers and any support agencies available to the school.

Involving Outside Agencies:

- If a concerning pattern of attendance is identified, the FLO will liaise with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). FLO will begin the Strive for 95% process. It is often possible to agree strategies with parents/carers which resolve the attendance pattern without recourse to the EWS. Parents/carers should be encouraged to be involved actively in dealing with attendance problems
- Referral to the EWS should be considered if a pupil's attendance has not significantly increased through the Strive for 95% processes.

Medical absences

Medical absences will normally be recorded as authorised; however, on occasion a pattern of frequent absence emerges that is related to illness or medical reasons. In this instance, school may ask parents for a medical note to confirm absences for any pupil who has more than ten days absence for medical reasons in any one term.

Promoting good attendance

Incentive schemes the school may use to promote good attendance:

- Attendance Heroes to be announced in assembly
- Treats and activities will be planned for pupils who have achieved very good levels of attendance during a given period.
- Certificates and prizes will be awarded to pupils who achieve exceptionally high attendance rates during the school year as part of the annual prize giving ceremony.
- Individual pupils will be rewarded for good attendance during a given period, particularly when this has been identified as a cause for concern
- Newsletters will contain regular features on promoting good attendance

Days when pupils are not required to attend

Pupils are required to attend school for 180 days per academic year. Where pupils are not required to attend due to a holiday period or for a school INSET day, specific codes will be entered into the register accordingly. Other circumstances for non-attendance will sometimes occur for example if there has been an enforced full or partial closure of the school due to unforeseen circumstances.

Section 5

Education Welfare Service (EWS) and other agencies

Where irregular attendance of a registered pupil is causing concern, the Local Authority will be notified through the Education Welfare Officer. He/she visits the school on a half termly basis to review attendance and to be informed of concerns. The involvement of the Education Welfare Officer usually happens when there is a significant concern. Reference will need to be made at this point to the Local Authority guidance on promoting good attendance and the procedures to be followed by the EWS including the FPNs and the use of legal intervention.

Annual School Targets

The school will set an annual target for attendance to promote improvement. For the Year 2023-24, the target is 93%.

This process will be agreed by the Governing Body before Dec 31st each year

Appendices (Not all appendices are attached at this time)

Appendix One – letter – All pupils when no reason for absence has been obtained

Appendix Two – Authorised Absences

Appendix Three – Unauthorised Absences

Appendix 1 No Reason for Absence Letter

Acting Headteacher/*Prifathro*
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YSGOL GYNRADD A MEITHRIN STRYD SIORS GEORGE STREET PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

Wainfelin Road, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 6BX

«date_of_printing»

Dear «salutation»

Your child «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» in Class «reg» was absent from school on «periods_of_absence» and we have not yet received a reason for absence. Please contact school to explain the reason for absence or complete the form below which must be returned to the school office.

If you have already given a member of staff a reason for absence, or you think you may have received this letter in error, please accept our apologies. However, please let the staff in our school office know so that we can indicate the reason for absence in the register.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

MRS K MANLEY
ACTING HEADTEACHER

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REPLY SLIP

My child «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» in Class «reg» was absent from school on «periods_of_absence» because:

SIGNED: _____ DATED: _____
PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARER

Appendix 2 Authorised Absences

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING	PHYSICAL MEANING
A	Present at registration	Present	This code should be used for pupils who were present in school during registration
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	Present	This code should be used for pupils that arrive late but before registration has closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival.
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	Approved educational activity	This code should be used where a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off-site at a supervised activity approved by the school. Examples such as attending taster day at other school, pupils attending alternative provision arranged and or agreed by the school, pupils undertaking work experience as part of an alternative curriculum. Schools should not use this code if a pupil has an agreed part-time timetable as part of reintegration or transition. These pupils should be marked as code C for those sessions.
D	Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)	Approved educational activity	The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school and they are not required to attend your school. The school where the child is expected to attend is responsible for accurately recording the pupil's attendance and chasing up non-attendance.
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity	This code should be used when a pupil is participating in or attending an approved sporting activity.
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved	This code should be used for

		educational activity	school organised trips or visits, including residential trips. Can also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by other organisations, provided they are supervised.
J	Interview	Approved educational activity	This code should be used for pupils undertaking interviews with prospective employers, or another educational establishment.
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved educational activity	This code should be used for work experience under section 560 of the Education Act 1996. Work experience undertaken as part of an alternative curriculum should not be recorded using this code.
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code / description)	Authorised absence	<p>This code should only be used in exceptional circumstances. Schools should consider the nature of the event, its frequency and the overall attendance pattern of the pupil.</p> <p>Examples might include special occasions such as weddings, family bereavement, young carer, maternity leave, public performance.</p>
F	Agreed extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	<p>Parents are not entitled to withdraw pupils for holidays during term time.</p> <p>School should only agree to absence for family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. School can only agreed to absence of more than 10 days in a school year in exceptional circumstances.</p>
H	Agreed family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	<p>Parents are not entitled to withdraw pupils for holidays during term time.</p> <p>School should only agree to absence for family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. School can only agreed to absence of more than 10 days</p>

			in a school year in exceptional circumstances.
I	Illness	Authorised absence	This code should be used when a child is absent for a whole session due to illness, medical or treatment. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can record the absence as unauthorised absence (code O) but should advise parents of the school's intention. Schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support absence on the ground of illness.
M	Medical or dental appointments	Authorised absence	For health and safety reasons a system must be in place to record that pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during a session for medical (GP), hospital or dental appointments
S	Study Leave	Authorised absence	Study leave should be used sparingly and only for year 11 pupils during mock and public examinations. When calculating the use of study leave and therefore authorised absence, schools must bear in mind that pupils cannot leave school until the last Friday in June.
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence	A pupil who is excluded for a fixed period remains on the school roll but cannot attend the school. A pupil who is permanently excluded remains on roll until the appeal process has been completed.
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence	Absence to take part in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Parents should be encouraged to give advance notice.
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Traveller child when the family is travelling. If the pupil's family are known to be travelling but it is not known whether the pupil is attending education provision, the

			absence should be authorised and recorded using this code. A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling.
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The main changes in the new codes and the associated WAG guidance are:

- A new 5th statistical category of ‘not required to attend’ to be used for a small number of specific infrequent circumstances. This category will cover absence due to the partial closure of a school e.g. where some of the pupils cannot attend due to bad weather. They would no longer be recorded as an authorised absence.
- Where Traveller children are registered at more than one school and are present at one of those schools, the other school (s) at which they are registered can record them as receiving approved educational activity. They would no longer be recorded as an authorised absence.

Appendix 3

Unauthorised absences (truancy)

N	No reason for the absence provided yet	Unauthorised absence	This code should be used when a pupil is absent from school and no reason has yet been provided for this absence. If no explanation is forthcoming after a reasonable amount of time the N code to be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised circumstances	Unauthorised absence	This code is used for all absences that the school considers to be unauthorised. A parent /carer may offer an explanation to the school. Examples such as shopping, ‘couldn’t get up’, having hair cut, transfer to another school.
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence	Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking into account of, the age of the child, the overall attendance of the child, the child’s stage of education and progress, its nature and parental wishes. Schools should invite parents in to school to discuss any proposed holiday in term time.
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	Unauthorised absence	Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be

			<p>alert to patterns of late arrival. Should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open. The WAG advises that schools should close the register to pupils 30 minutes after the start of the session.</p> <p>Schools</p>
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Appendix 9 Not required to attend codes

X	Non-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not required to attend	This code should be used for pupils who have not attained the age of 5 years at the start of the term in which the session takes place or were 16 years before the start of the school year in which it takes place. Under the new regulations, schools cannot delete Year 11 pupils who intend to remain at the school and enter sixth form from the school registers.
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend	This code should be used where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable causes such as no water or heating or flooding or the transport provided by the school or LA for pupils is not available.
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend	This code should be used for administration purposed for pupils expected to join the school roll. Under new regulations, schools must now put pupils on the admissions register on the first day that the school expects them to attend not, as previously, when they first attend. Schools should also remember that all pupils on the

			admissions register must also be entered on the attendance register and their attendance recorded.
#		Not required to attend	This code should be used for planned closures for the whole school.