



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

Responsibility	L E Pownall
Review	September 2023

## **1. Introduction**

The Vale of Glamorgan School Improvement and Inclusion Service aims to:

***Promote and support excellent school attendance by direct work with schools, pupils and their families.***

The importance of regular attendance cannot be overestimated. It is a prerequisite to a good education and securing it must be a high priority for schools and their governing bodies, as well as for parents and pupils. Pupils who fail to attend regularly not only diminish the value of the education provided but may also jeopardise their future life chances to succeed.

The Local Authority (LA) encourages schools to adopt a **whole school approach** to attendance. This requires commitment from all staff employed within the school, together with governors, parents, pupils and the LA.

This approach relates to a wide range of other issues, including punctuality, rewards and incentives, re-integration of long-term absentees, curricular differentiation, home-school links and the role of the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

## **2. 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 (authorised absence)
- 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 to 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 for a pupil within the prescribed catchment area

**The Act also places a legal obligation on:**

- the LA to provide and enforce attendance
- the schools to register attendance and notify the LA of a child's absence from school. (Welsh Assembly circular 47/2006) and the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010.

## Definitions

- a) Compulsory school age - Under Section 8 of the Education Act 1996, children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday. The end of term dates are 31 March, 31 August and 31 December. A young person ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.
- b) The definition of 'parent' is set out in section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and includes:
  - i. all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
  - ii. any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and
  - iii. any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.
- c) Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law.
- d) Walking Distance - As defined by Section 3 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008:
  - i. in relation to a primary school aged child receiving education at a maintained school, a non-maintained special school, a Pupil Referral Unit or independent school named in a statement maintained for the child, means two miles (3.218688 kilometres), and
  - ii. in relation to a secondary school aged child receiving education at a maintained school, a non-maintained special school, a Pupil Referral Unit or independent school named in a statement maintained for the child, means three miles (4.828032 kilometres).

In each case measured by the nearest available route which is safe to walk either escorted or unescorted.

- e) Full-time education - Inclusion and Pupil Support 47/2006 defines full time education as:

Key Stage 1: 21 hours

Key Stage 2: 23.5 hours

Key Stage 3 / 4 (Including Year 10 only): 24 hours

Key Stage 4 (Year 11): 25 hours

### **3. School Attendance Register**

Schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take an attendance register twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It may also contribute information to pupils' end-of-term reports, records of achievement and leavers' references. An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial if poor attendance and punctuality within a school are to be tackled. It is vital that pupils are aware that registration is a significant part of the school day.

All staff involved with the registration process should be made aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and keeping the register is of the utmost importance.

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from an authorised representative of the school and includes all unexplained absences. The decision taken by the school to give or withhold authorisation for an absence is a critical factor in determining the local authority's decision to prosecute parents as prosecution is only possible for unauthorised absences. There will be occasions when the school may authorise a pupil's absence and hence no offence is deemed to have been committed.

It is important that schools exercise caution in the authorisation of absence. If they are suspicious of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be further investigated and left unauthorised until the matter has been clarified to the satisfaction of the school. The decision taken by the school to authorise absence or not, is of critical importance in determining the level of involvement of the EWS. If the school has authorised a pupil's absence they have, in effect, given leave, therefore there is no case in law for the parents to answer.

It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

### **4. School Attendance Policy**

See Appendix A

Schools are encouraged to develop a whole school policy on attendance in discussion with staff, governors, parents and pupils taking account of Assembly Government guidance on Inclusion and Pupil Support and good practice identified by the local authority. This policy should:

- give a high priority to attendance and punctuality;
- ensure compliance with all statutory requirements;
- ensure that clear information is regularly communicated to parents and pupils;
- collect and make effective and constructive use of attendance data;
- provide clear guidance to staff on the process of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence;
- contain clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness;

- recognise the importance of early intervention;
- make provision for first-day of absence contact;
- monitor post-registration truancy through the taking of class registers and spot checks;
- be alert to critical times (e.g. Key Stage 2/3 transfer);
- identify a range of strategies to deal with absenteeism / lateness;
- provide for a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions;
- develop attendance incentive schemes which recognise pupils' attendance achievements;
- consider the setting of targets for individuals, classes, year groups, etc.;
- establish procedures for identifying and reintegrating long-term absentees;
- provide for regular structured meetings between school staff and the EWO
- ensure that reasonable steps are taken by the school before an appropriate referral is made to the EWO;
- stress to parents the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to requests for family holidays during term-time which will only be considered in exceptional and extenuating family circumstances; See Family Holidays during Term Time
- use opportunities such as parents' evenings and the school prospectus / brochure to remind parents of the school policy on attendance;
- involve governors;
- identify a key senior member of staff with overall responsibility for attendance;
- ensure that good practice is identified and disseminated;
- be regularly monitored and reviewed; and
- take steps to create a culture which encourages attendance, addressing school based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, the curriculum, etc.

## 5. Absence

It is important to emphasise that there are two different types of absence, **authorised** and **unauthorised**, and that unauthorised absence is perceived as truancy which could ultimately result in the Education Welfare Service (EWS) having to prosecute parents for the non school attendance of their child/ren.

Parents should be reminded that **it is only the head teacher who may decide whether an absence is to be authorised or unauthorised**. Parents should also be made aware that a letter does not in itself authorise an absence, only the school's acceptance of the explanation offered by the letter authorises the absence. It is important to clarify precisely what constitutes authorised or unauthorised absence. Examples of authorised absence include:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

## Authorised Absence

Only a Head teacher can authorise an absence. Parents and the LA do not have the power to authorise absences.

The key points head teachers should consider when deciding to authorise absence are:

- It is a legal requirement that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually
- Schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence where there is doubt as to the validity of that explanation
- Parents should be aware that only **the Head teacher** has the right to agree to a pupil's absence for family holidays in term time. Each application for leave should be considered in view of the specific circumstances of the family
- Schools should always expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties
- An explanation is required for every absence. If one is not forthcoming the absence will be treated as unauthorised
- Where absence is authorised, schools should remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance
- Lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance

## Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is absence without approval from the Head teacher of the school and includes all unexplained absences. Thus, the decision taken by the head teacher to give, or withhold, authorisation for an absence, is critical in determining the LA's approach to any attendance case; for if a child's absence is approved by the Head teacher, for whatever reasons, no offence is deemed to have been committed and the EWS cannot consider prosecuting parents.

If schools are suspicious of the explanation given by parents, the absence should be recorded as unauthorised until further investigations have clarified the circumstances to the satisfaction of the school.

## 6. The Role of Parents

- Parents and guardians have a duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education (Education Act 1996, Section 7) suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude and any special educational needs s/he may have
- They are responsible for ensuring their child arrives at school on time
- They should ensure that their child stays at school for the day unless alternative arrangements are made

- Parents and guardians are responsible for informing schools of the reason for their child's absence as soon as possible, preferably on the first day of absence
- Parents may allow their child to be absent from school:
  - i. with the permission of the Head teacher for a day of religious observance
  - ii. because they live beyond the statutory walking distance and no transport has been provided by the LA (unless the parent has chosen a school outside the prescribed catchment area)
  - iii. because he or she is prevented from attending school by an unavoidable cause directly affecting the pupil (e.g. illness)
- Parents are discouraged from taking their child out of school for holidays, even though Head teachers may authorise up to 10 days per academic year
- They are encouraged to see themselves as partners with schools in the education of their children

### **Parentally Condoned Absence**

Parentally condoned absence is more difficult to identify than any other form. If there is reason to doubt that the explanation offered about a particular absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised. Since all absences are to be treated as unauthorised unless and until schools agree on a satisfactory explanation, it is important that schools have procedures, consistently applied, to pursue explanations and for amending registers (Welsh Assembly Circular 47/2006, p. 73). Such procedures would indicate a request for medical advice from the school nurse via the community medical officer regarding non-school attendance.

- Pupils are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illnesses. However, they should not be kept away from school when they are well enough to go to lessons or when they have minor ailments which do not prevent them from taking part in their education. It would be useful to consider whether the ailment would keep parents and teachers away from work.
- Schools should have an established system in place to enable parents / carers to report their child's absence because of illness. It is reasonable for the school to ask the nature of the illness, ask the parent the expected length of absence and make arrangements for the parent to call the school again if the situation changes.
- Schools have 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.
- However, staff should not request additional evidence every time pupils miss school due to illness. Restricting such requests to when the school has concerns that a pupil was not ill or that the illness was trivial and did not warrant time off reduces the administrative burden on schools. Schools and

local authority staff should also be aware of the pressure they could place on doctors' appointment systems if they request a Doctor's Note every time pupils are ill. They should also be aware of the limited value that such notes have if a doctor did not treat the pupil for the illness.

- Schools should have a clear policy to address incidences of recurring absence where illness is given as a reason, but there are indications or concerns that this may not be the case. In some schools, several sessions of illness that appear unfounded can result in the pupil and parent or carer being offered an appointment with the school nurse.

## **Absence during term time**

(Also refer to Page 18 – Fixed Penalty Notices.)

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday. Parents are given term dates in advance and are expected to arrange holidays during school breaks. If parents wish to take their children on holiday during term time it is a legal requirement to apply for permission in advance from the head teacher. Such permission may be granted in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body of the school. Only in exceptional circumstances will the amount of leave granted exceed more than ten school days in any twelve month period.

Where parents fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away in excess of the agreed period or where parents fail to apply for permission, the time taken should be treated as an **unauthorised absence**.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council advises all Governing Bodies not to authorise any holiday requests of more than 10 days during term time, except where there are exceptional and extenuating circumstances.

The parent must make a strong case for taking a child away for more than two weeks a year. The following factors should be considered when assessing requests

- Time of the proposed trip;
- length and purpose of the holiday
- duration of the holiday and its impact on continuity of learning
- circumstances of the family and parents' wishes;
- overall attendance pattern of the child;

Leave of absence of more than two weeks must be seen as exceptional. Schools should carefully explore with parents why such leave of absence is necessary.

If the Head teacher considers there are exceptional circumstances, this may result in the school agreeing with the request and authorising the absence accordingly.



This means that holiday requests of more than 10 days during term time **will not be authorised** by the school unless there is agreement between the school and the parent/carer.

There is an expectation that parents and carers will abide by these arrangements in order to continue to secure the best possible educational outcomes for their child/children during their time in schools in the Vale of Glamorgan.

However, where parents fail to abide by the agreement reached with the school and keep a child away from school or where parents fail to seek permission, the time taken will be treated as an **unauthorised absence** in accordance with the application of this policy.

Where schools are experiencing difficulties with family holidays taken during term time, they may wish to:

- issue a letter on the matter to parents, requesting a meeting to discuss further; or
- contact the school EWO for advice and support.

All requests for holidays during term time should be in writing, which should be made by a parent / carer of the child even if they are not going on holiday with them. If the parent with whom the child lives does not give consent to the holiday, leave cannot be given lawfully by the school except by a court order.

### **Extended overseas trips**

When making judgements about extended absence for pupils from minority ethnic families, schools should ensure that full account has been taken, not only of the Regulations and Welsh Assembly Government guidance, but also of the situation of minority ethnic families in general and the particular circumstances relating to each individual case. It is important that schools show an understanding of the parents' perspective even though the school may not be able to comply with a request for absence.

Schools should ensure that all parents are aware of the school's policy on absence.

In the case of minority ethnic parents, special care should be taken to ensure that the Regulations are fully explained and understood. Interpreters should be used if necessary or, where a number of parents are concerned, the school may wish to consider organising a special meeting for these parents.

Schools should take account of the following:

- a visit involving a family overseas has an entirely different significance from the normal associations with 'holiday' which is the category recognised by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- visits may be very important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;

- parents may feel that the planned visit outweighs the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school - maintaining family links may involve greater significance and greater pressure in some societies than it does in the UK; and
- the reasons for parents making a visit may be similar to those for indigenous parents, e.g. family illness, bereavement, etc.

However, schools should explain to parents that:-

- advance permission must be agreed;
- the absence should be planned carefully with the school;
- where possible, extended visits should be made during school holidays;
- holidays during examination time should be avoided at all costs;
- some children never catch up and will under-perform in examinations;
- their child's name may be removed from the register if he or she has not returned to school within ten school days of the expected date of return.

## **7. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities of Education Welfare Service:**

The EWS provide support to schools, pupils and parents to ensure regular attendance and address problems relating to absenteeism. The Service liaises with other agencies and provides an important link between home and school helping parents and teachers to work in partnership in order that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available locally.

The EWS acts on behalf of the local authority in enforcing a parent's duty to provide appropriate education. The main function of the EWS is to improve overall attendance and pupil wellbeing and to reduce persistent absence in all schools and alternative education provision. However, in many instances the EWS also undertake other related duties, which may include:

- regulating child employment and performance licences for school age children;
- regulating chaperone licences
- helping to arrange alternative educational provision for individual pupils;
- advising on children being educated otherwise than at school; and
- advising on safeguarding children in education.

The main role of the EWS in the Vale of Glamorgan is to:

- contribute to the local authority and school's drive for school effectiveness;
- work in partnership with schools, pupils, parents and communities to ensure educational entitlement and regular attendance;
- link with a network of agencies providing education, health and social services for individuals with specific needs; and
- work effectively and proactively with school based staff to increase attendance, reduce absence and improve pupil wellbeing.

This is sought to be achieved through:

- promoting and supporting whole school attendance policies, particularly the Callio Strategy for Improving Attendance
- providing advice on proven good practice;
- working together with school staff, pupils, parents and relevant others on programmes designed to improve attendance level;
- undertaking individual work with pupils;
- undertaking family centred work;
- developing group work with pupils and parents;
- processing requests for Fixed Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance
- initiating statutory proceedings on behalf of the LA.

Importantly, legal action to enforce attendance can only be taken by the Vale of Glamorgan Council through its EWS.

### **Engaging and Working with Parents**

Parentally condoned absence is, in many ways, more difficult to identify than any other form of pupil absence. This form of absence is equally as damaging to the pupil's educational experience as any other form of absence. The parents, in many cases, perceive that they are keeping their child away from school for legitimate reasons. They may feel that they are protecting their child/children. It is essential when school staff feel that a pattern of non-attendance is emerging, they work closely with education, social and health support services to ensure the most appropriate and effective intervention is available to the pupil and parents.

Effective engagement is the bedrock on which all work with parents is built. Engagement should be underpinned by the values and principles that guide the work of the EWS. Key to this is respecting parents' rights and supporting them in meeting their responsibilities.

Parents of children from different cultures may feel that the school is not a safe or proper environment for their child. It is vital that schools investigate and endeavour to recognise cultural issues that may prevent a pupil from attending school. There are support services that will assist and advise schools and parents on ways forward when these difficulties arise.

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents / carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness (after the close of the Register) in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved.

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. In the Vale of Glamorgan we are committed to working with our parents and schools to support and encourage them to:

- take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- attend, when possible, parents' evenings and other school events;

- ensure that their child completes his / her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;
- always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning of any absence;
- confirm this in writing when the child returns to school;
- to ensure family holidays do not take place during term-time; and
- talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to go to school.

## **8. The Role of the Local Authority**

Under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, the Vale of Glamorgan Council has a duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Further information can be found in Section 4 of the 'Inclusion and Pupil Support' guidance document.

In September 2009 the Welsh Assembly Government commenced Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which requires that local authorities must make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a 'suitable education'.

Implementation of the duty under section 436A should be integrated with the wider range of duties placed on local authorities, including the Children's Act 2004 (sections 25-29) and the Welsh Assembly Government's Safeguarding Children Working Together under the Children's Act 2004 that aims to improve outcomes, and safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

New legislation has empowered designated Vale of Glamorgan Council Education Welfare Officers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to parents of children and young people who have unauthorised absence from school. The issuing of FPNs is the responsibility of the EWS in response to requests made by head teachers, their nominated deputies and the police. (See Code of Conduct – Fixed Penalty Notice for Non-Attendance at School).

A School Attendance Order (SAO) applies in cases when a parent of a child of compulsory school age fails to prove that the child is receiving suitable education and where the authority believes the child should attend school. A SAO may be used to direct a parent to send their child to a specified school, and should be used when a pupil is not on roll at any school. They are not intended for pupils who attend irregularly.

- The LA is charged in law with enforcing attendance

- The LA can apply to the courts for an Education Supervision Order (Children Act 1989, Section 36) and where necessary can prosecute parents who fail to ensure their child's attendance at school (Education Act 1996, Section 444)
- The Education Welfare Service works on behalf of the LA with schools, Social Services, Youth Offending Service (YOS), the Police and other relevant agencies in helping parents and the LA to meet their statutory obligations on school attendance
- The LA works with schools to develop whole-school policies to improve pupils' attendance at school
- The LA liaises with the police in arranging and conducting truancy patrols when appropriate

Information on pupils' attendance is monitored by the Inclusion Service. This data is used to support schools in increasing their attendance levels and decreasing their frequency of unauthorised absence, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups.

- All schools to make data available to the LA, ideally in electronic format.
- The LA will collate and analyse attendance data to provide an appropriate targeted provision of services
- The figures are reported to the Directorate Management Team and considered by Scrutiny Committee, as part of the progress report of the directorate's service plans
- The Governing Body of each school should review its attendance policy on a regular basis

## **9. Target Setting**

There is a statutory requirement to set attendance targets yearly, which have to be agreed by the school governors. These targets are set in consultation with the LA and the CSC. The targets should be both realistic and sufficiently challenging in order to raise school attendance in general.

Schools need to be aware of the interventions that have been successful as part of their evaluation process. The Estyn Thematic Reports on Effective Practice in Improving Attendance outline examples of good work being carried out by secondary and primary schools in Wales. Evaluation might usefully be an annual item on the agenda of the governing body, with termly updates in the school governors' meetings at Primary and Secondary level. When evaluating procedures, the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absences has improved
- Reintegration plans have been successful
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance, with the school, the governing body, parents and the local community

### Appendix A (Llantwit Major School policy)

*Note: It is anticipated that WG will provide new attendance guidance in the Autumn of 2022.*

## **Welsh Government attendance Framework**

This 2012 document sets out the WG advised approach to school attendance.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/all-wales-attendance-framework.pdf>

The 2010 WG coding guidance is also a key document for all schools.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf>

## **Absence reporting processes**

It is imperative both for safeguarding and attainment reasons that schools have robust absence reporting and systems in place for ensuring that both authorised and unauthorised absences are tracked and flagged both individually and by year or cohort etc.

## **Impact of Missed Sessions**

“...pupils with no absence are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A\*-C or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ GCSEs A\*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics than pupils missing 15-20 per cent of KS4 lessons.”

**(The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4, Department for Education, 2015)**

### Overall school aim/attendance

The school's primary aim is to develop a creative association amongst pupils, staff, parents and the local community so that all pupils can achieve the highest possible standards in academic, personal and social life. Pupils' attendance at schools is a basic requirement for the achievement of this goal. The school will therefore work to achieve the highest possible rate of attendance by its pupils.

To achieve this the School will: -

- Offer rewards to students who meet with declared attendance criteria.
- Communicate with parents pointing out the importance of attendance and requesting that family holidays be taken during school holidays.
- Inform parents when a pupil's attendance drops below the school's agreed benchmarks.
- Issue with academic reports to parents a full statement of attendance with an accompanying explanation of codes used. Parents will have the opportunity to authorise any outstanding unexplained absences.
- Check students form attendance during year assemblies and praise good attendance.
- Strive to ensure that every absence is explained by the use of follow up procedures when an absence remains unauthorised.
- Check internal truancy regularly (via the Attendance Officer).
- Targeting Years 7-11 with first day absence telephone texts.
- Work with the Educational Welfare Officer to monitor attendance.
- Work closely with outside agencies on any attendance related issues and initiatives.

### Key staff

#### The Role of the Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer is the first point of contact in reporting a pupil absence. The AO also follows-up any daily absences prioritising an identified list of pupils e.g. CLA, CP; similarly, the AO follows-up any individual lesson absences, again using a prioritisation list. (Pupils are prioritised in consultation with key staff such as Progress Leaders.) The AO will have regular contact with pupils and parents/carers to support attendance.

#### The Role of the Form Tutor

As the daily point of contact for every pupil, the pastoral role of the form tutor is very important in promoting attendance and following up absence with pupils.

## The Role of the Year group Progress team (Progress Leader and Progress LSA)

The Progress team are a key escalation point for any issues within the year group and a vital point of contact for all parents. Attendance meetings are part of their routine in order to encourage attendance and to put in place any required support mechanisms to remove barriers of poor attendance.

## The role of the Leader of Attendance

To track the attendance of students across the school and raise standards by leading, managing and directing strategies to tackle poor attendance.

- Manage work of attendance officer
- Increase phone calls and direct texts sent home to address key issues, and realign expectations of pupils and parents
- Review and improve relevance of whole school attendance letters and individual trigger/ follow up letters
- Work with relevant staff and coordinate school response to absence to ensure impact, and ensure accessibility to Vale support
- Link with Keeva McDermot, Amanda Geddes (LA) and other high performing schools to review and implement good practice strategies for excellence
- Training for CME, PSPs, EHE. Implement relevant actions e.g. 1 year PSP flag; liaise with ALNCO.
- Lead PSP provision, tracker, paperwork.
- Lead referrals for EWS, AWE, EHE, CME
- Coordinate Attendance rewards
- Coordinate meeting agenda between PL and AO
- Coordinate and connect attendance actions by AO and PL/P LSAs
- High profile, regular Attendance promotion and communication - parents and pupils
- QA identification and management of safeguarding of pupils of concern – e.g. CLA, CP, not sighted (e.g. High level concern mental health; CP policy – 1 day unexplained absence after weekend, 2 days in week)
- Lead responses to LA and termly support meetings for attendance issues
- Lead staff and implement impactful strategies to reach attendance target / Q1
- Pupil voice
- Action warnings and FPNs to impact on attendance and punctuality
- Coordinate strategies to improve lateness
- SLT feedback / summary info for SLT strategic engagement lead
- Coordinate approaches to improve persistent absence
- Interrogate data to challenge and support PL actions
- Monitor target groups compared to non target groups



## Lateness

Pupils who are late report to the school office to sign in. Pupil lateness is monitored by all staff, and will be addressed with a similar approach to absence. Persistent lateness, however, may incur sanctions such as detentions, and incur a Fixed Penalty Notice (see below).

## Liaison with LA

The school is supported by the VOG inclusion team who advise school on measures that can and should be taken by school prior to referral for LA support. In all instances the team will seek to understand the reasons for non attendance and to engage with learner and parent/ carer and other professionals to seek to support re engagement or attendance rather than consider penal measures in the first instance.

Since COVID the inclusion team have developed to ensure they offer a more child/learner focused approach to absence; ensuring use of well-being data such as SELFIE or TIS motivational to enable better understanding of learner voice in regard to attendance issues. The team has developed enhanced engagement and wellbeing support to meet the evolving needs post COVID such as the Attainment, Wellbeing and Engagement (AWE) team.

From September 2022 WG funding to support attendance will be used to fund Attendance and Engagement Liaison officers (LEOs). These officers will be part of the LA Inclusion team but will work in school, in the home or outreach, and will act as an intermediate tier prior to Inclusion officer allocation.

## Reduced timetables

Where a learner is not able to access a full-time school or education provision then this is documented by the Vale of Glamorgan, using the process and format of a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP). This document is usually a multi-agency document and process and must include the engagement and consent of the parent as well as regular review of the PSP. The PSP will set out the reasons why a full-time education is not able to be accessed but will also set out the measures which are in place to increase the learner's access to full time education as soon as is possible. The LA Inclusion team provides training on the use of PSPs and reduced timetables and also separate guidance on when a PSP may or may not be supported as in the best interests of the learner.

## **Penalties for non attendance:**

Schools and the LA may instigate legal penal measures for non attendance. These include the use of Fixed penalty notices (FPN) and Education Act Prosecutions for failing to secure the regular attendance of a learner.

### Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:

- At least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence during the current term. 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

The usual response to a first offence might be a warning rather than a penalty. However, authorised officers have the discretion to issue a penalty notice for a first offence in circumstances where the parent's/carer's conduct is particularly blameworthy. For example where unauthorised absence was for an extended period and condoned by the parent/carer, such as where the parent/carer has chosen to take their child on holiday during term time without authorisation.

## **School Self Evaluation**

All Vale schools are expected to complete a standard attendance self-evaluation and engage with the Local Authority to jointly address any issues identified by the self-evaluation. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to promote a common, coordinated approach to managing attendance across Vale schools. This self-evaluation should be reviewed on a regular basis, the frequency of which is determined by the attendance quartile position of individual schools.