



Policy for ATTENDANCE

In line with the school's aims and objectives, Coedpenmaen Primary School is committed to raising the standards of education of all of its learners in all areas of the curriculum so that they develop the skills necessary to cope confidently with the demands of everyday life and lifelong learning.

To work towards this, this policy takes account of the Education Act (1996), The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, RCTCBC's Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices and The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) 2013).

It was originally formulated during October 2014, following a review of the All Wales Attendance Framework, RCT's Attendance Toolkit and RCTCBC's Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notice for Non-Attendance at School, and presented to the staff prior to consultation and discussion in November 2014 and adopted in December 2014. It was amended during the Spring Term 2016, following updated notifications from Welsh Government and Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC, with the Governing Body of Coedpenmaen Primary School formally adopting the amended policy during their full Governing Body Meeting of 3rd March 2016 for immediate implementation. The Head teacher will review the policy every two years and, should amendments be necessary, they will be brought to the attention of all staff and the governing body.

The policy outlines the purpose, nature and management of attendance processes in our school.

Legal context:

"Parents/Carers of pupils of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school or otherwise"

Section 7, Education Act 1996

"If a pupil of compulsory school age who is registered at school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence"

Section 444(1), Education Act 1996

"It is the legal duty of the school to keep an accurate attendance register of all pupils"

Section 434(1), Education Act 1996

All pupils of compulsory age must be punctual and registered twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010

In line with the RCTCBC's Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for regular non-attendance at school, the school has the power to request a penalty notice be issued to a parent if the attendance patterns of the pupil meet the criteria stated in the Code

Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013

Signed  Headteacher Spring 2023
2023 Review date Summer 2024

Signed:  Chair of Governors Spring



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Aims

The school is committed to working with families so that all pupils attend school regularly. The aim of this attendance policy is to ensure that there is an efficient system, known to all, for ensuring a whole school approach to promoting good school attendance, and responding promptly and effectively to resolve attendance related issues.

This policy outlines the appropriate procedures in place and how the school will work with parents/carers and pupils to achieve this aim.

Expectations

- Pupils of compulsory school age must be punctual for morning and afternoon registration
- Punctuality is a legal requirement for all pupils of compulsory school age, and the parent(s)/carer(s) of a pupil whom is consistently late (after close of the register) i.e. persistent absenteeism may face legal proceedings.
- If pupils need to leave/ be absent from school a note (verbal or written)/medical card requesting permission is required from parents/carers
- Parents/carers will provide information and/or reasons for every absence.
- The school will record all absences accurately, adding notes to the electronic system to ensure accurate records are held.

Recording Attendance

As a legal document, registers are kept on the premises at all times. These registers are completed electronically on SIMS.net at the beginning of each session every day.

- Morning registers open at 9.00am for all children.
- Children arriving after 9.10am will be marked as late (L).
- Morning registers close at 9:30am, any child arriving after this time is will receive a 'late after the register has closed' mark and is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U).
- Afternoon registers open at 1.00pm for all children.
- Children arriving after 1.10pm will be marked as late (L).
- Afternoon registers close at 1:30pm, any child arriving after this time is will receive a 'late after the register has closed' mark and is recorded as an unauthorised absence (U).
- Where there is an absence, teachers are required to enter the appropriate explanatory notes on the electronic system.
- A sickness may only be authorised if a message has been received from the office, the parent/carers or a written explanation of absence. Details of this will be recorded on the electronic register.
- Telephone calls for children's absences are logged in the office / added to SIMs when the call is taken.

For any pupil who arrives after the registration period, an unauthorised late mark (U) will be issued. The accuracy of the register is important in order to support any statutory intervention that may be required.

The register must record whether a pupil is present, absent, not required to attend or attending an approved educational activity (treated as present).



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Importantly, every half-day absence must be classified as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised' - only the school can make this decision.

It is a requirement to keep weekly totals of possible and actual attendance, along with the number of authorised and unauthorised absences per week (in sessions). This information will be maintained by the school office staff on school databases (SIMS.net) and will be made available to authorised personnel.

Definitions:

'Authorised absence'

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

'Unauthorised absence'

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a Parent or Carer.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

'An approved educational activity'

- One taking place off the school premises
- Approved by a person authorised by the Governing Body or Headteacher
- Supervised by a person authorised by the Governing Body or Headteacher
- Of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips, educational visits or where pupils are receiving part of their education at another location whilst remaining on roll, and in most cases under school supervision.

'Not required to attend'

- Used for a small number of specific infrequent circumstances. An absence resulting from the partial closure of a school e.g. due bad weather when road conditions make some roads impassable.

Responsibilities

The school is accountable for accurately recording attendance and implementing appropriate procedures to achieve expected levels of attendance.

The performance indicator by which we judge the success of our efforts is set each year by our average attendance figure. The AWS provide the school with our annual target for attendance.

An **Attendance and Wellbeing Officer (AWO)** works alongside staff at Coedpenmaen Primary School. The AWO liaises with the head teacher or appropriate personnel when carrying out their duties.



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The AWO visits the school at regular intervals (and/or accesses the school's registers remotely) to inspect class registers and monitor the electronic recording of data. They also check for inconsistencies in register completion and identify pupils who are causing concern. At these visits/reviews, potential problems regarding attendance or lateness will be discussed so that proactive steps can be taken to support the children and their families. The AWO may also visit the school as a 'data response visit' where their review of school data needs further clarification from school leaders.

As well as acting upon problems of lateness or absence, the AWO is often asked to act as liaison officer between school and home as well as other outside agencies e.g. social services, through their role to support pupil 'wellbeing'. We regard the role of the AWO as being vital in terms of social liaison.

Following referral, the AWO makes appropriate home visits and provides the school with details of action they have taken as a result of the referral. The AWO may also be required to notify parents/carers in writing of their legal requirement to ensure that their child/ren regularly attend school and arrive on time. Procedures are followed at school to instigate referral to the AWS *when required*.

The school will make every effort to enlist the support of the whole school community in promoting good school attendance.

The **Headteacher** has oversight for whole school attendance and will ensure school policy/procedures are followed. The Headteacher has ultimate responsibility to monitor attendance and instigate the RCTCBC procedures when required.

Progress to targets for attendance are included in the termly Governing Body Meetings, within the Headteacher's Report. Overall average attendance and figures for unauthorised attendance are also reported in the Governors Annual Report to Parents.

In addition the Headteacher is obliged to make attendance figures known to legitimate agencies (e.g. the Local Authority) by completing appropriate returns and through use of the school's information systems.

The headteacher will follow guidelines in requesting the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) in line with the local authority's Code of Conduct.

The **School Attendance Officer (SAO)** will work in conjunction with the Headteacher. The SAO ensures that the registers are completed by staff using SIMS.net and that relevant reports are analysed (i.e. pupil attendance less than 90%, whole school attendance trends, identification of the best attending class, report of unauthorised absences).

Each week, the SAO investigates the reasons for individual pupil absence and, in conjunction with the Headteacher, makes a decision on the appropriate action to take. Letters are sent to parents/carers if no valid reason for absence has been received. AWS procedures will be followed where deemed necessary by school leaders. The SAO will liaise with AWS when required.

The SAO and HT will monitor progress to the target set by AWS. This will be reported to the Governing Body on a termly basis, through the Headteacher's Report. The Governing Body will also be informed of the 'unauthorised absences' and any referrals which are in progress.



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Class Teachers are initially responsible for encouraging good attendance and have a legal responsibility to keep their register correctly – using the codes accurately as detailed within the All Wales Attendance Toolkit. Class teachers will also be the initial contact for seeking out reasons for absence if no letter/phone call has been received. Class teachers will also refer children for whom concerns exist to school leaders. Both the class teacher and the Headteacher have responsibility for initial communication with parents/carers where clear concerns exist.

All absence codes will be supported with information in the 'notes' field. Under the guidance of the Headteacher, the attendance officer will liaise with the AWS and provide reports as requested. They also complete statistical returns for legitimate agencies as and when required.

Governing Body. The school has a named link Governor (Mrs Helen Rose) who monitors attendance as part of their role on the Governing Body.

The Headteacher provides the Governing Body with details of school attendance on a termly basis, through the Headteacher's Report to the Governing Body. The Governing Body will ensure details of school attendance are included in the school's prospectus and the Governing Body's Annual Report to Parents.

Requests for leave of absence

- Illness

- 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.
- On first day of absence parents are expected to ring into school and leave a message on the answer phone to provide reason why their child isn't attending school that day.
- The 'I' code will be used, with a reason in the 'comments' field on SIMS to mark an absence as 'Illness'.
- When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register as no reason yet received (N). Office staff will endeavour to contact a parent or carer (using Class Dojo if possible).
- The appropriate code will then be used following advice from the parent/carers.
- This absence will be recorded as "O" if no reason is provided.
- When the child returns to school, a note should be brought from a parent or carer to explain the absence.
- A letter will be sent home to request a reason for absence if no notification is received - this will be coded appropriately upon return of the letter
- A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment.
- If a child receives more than 20 'I' codes throughout the year, a school letter will be sent to advise families that no further 'illness' absences will be authorised unless medical evidence is received (e.g, appointment card, copy of prescription). This is to ensure the child receives the medical attention required if a recurring illness is evidenced.

- Family holidays during term time

'Holidays are fine - but not in term time'.

'Missing 10 days of school each year = almost 1 whole year of school lost by the age of 16'



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Following Local Authority guidance, Coedpenmaen Primary School continues to adopt a firm approach to requests for holidays in term time, unless the pupil and family are exempt under one of the three 'exceptional' circumstances criteria. These exemptions are:

- Families of serving armed forces personnel
- Parent or child experiencing a life limiting illness
- Families that have suffered an acute trauma

Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that as a right the school will agree to family holidays during term time. Each application will be considered on its merit. The school has regard to continuity of learning and takes into account relevant factors (though not exhaustively) such as:

- The time of year proposed for the trip
- Length and purpose of the holiday
- If the trip falls on WG assessment week, or other advertised assessment times throughout the year
- Overall attendance pattern of the pupil

Whilst the school acknowledges that this firm approach can, at times, be difficult for parents, the education of the children remains our core purpose. As such, the school encourages an ethos of expecting children to attend school "on time, every time." This ethos ensures that continuity of learning is the priority for all pupils, across the whole school.

As a result, the school will comply with local authority guidance and the "Code of Conduct" in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices in the following circumstances.

The school will unauthorise holiday requests, and therefore request the local authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for holiday absences in the following circumstances:

- The holiday is during Welsh Government tests or,
- Attendance for the previous full academic year is below 95% (Welsh Government's target for all learners) or,
- Current school attendance is a cause for concern and AWS procedures have begun to be followed (e.g. standard letters issued to inform parents of school concerns.)
- The child does not return to school following the agreed period of the holiday absence.
- The school does not authorise the absence and the pupil still goes on holiday, this will be recorded as an 'unauthorised holiday ('G').

Applications for holiday /leave of absence must be made on the appropriate documentation (available from the school office).

If parents/carers keep a child away for a period longer than that agreed, any extra time will be recorded as unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice issued. Pupils may be deleted from roll when they fail to return within 10 school days of the agreed return date unless there is a good reason for the continued absence.

The Attendance and Wellbeing Service has a number of procedures to follow to ensure the 'Code of Conduct' is applied fairly and, as such, provide a 'quality check' with regard to school referrals.



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'To comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, the school will operate in accordance with the local authority's Code of Conduct for fixed penalty notices for regular non-attendance at school. It remains the discretion of the head teacher to authorise absences in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the local authority.'

Only in **exceptional** circumstances can leave of absence be considered in excess of ten school days in any one school year (in any event ten days should not be regarded as the norm). The Attendance and Wellbeing Service will be contacted for advice and guidance that may require a meeting to discuss the request with parents. In such circumstances the school may discuss the possibility of making up a pack of work to be completed while away e.g. cultural home visits.

It is a parent's choice to remove a child for the purposes of taking a holiday and therefore work will not be provided by the school. Ideas as to how a parent can educationally enhance the trip can be made available on request.

- Other absences

There are many reasons why a child may be absent from school. It remains the discretion of the head teacher to authorise absences in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the local authority.

NB: leaving early in the school day can have the same impact to your child's progress as arriving at school late. All requests for your child to leave school early need to be made to the school office. Parents should endeavour to ensure early finishes to school are kept to an absolute minimum. Any instances of a child leaving school early on a regular basis may result in the school contacting the Attendance and Wellbeing Service for advice.

The headteacher will follow guidelines in requesting the issue of an FPN in line with the local authority's Code of Conduct for pupil absences.

What happens when a Fixed Penalty Notice Request is sent to the Local Authority?

The Code of Conduct states that a school can submit a request to the local authority to issue a fixed penalty notice in the following instances:

- Where a pupil has accrued 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absences in the current term (O and U codes);
- Where a parent/carer refuses to engage with a school in the interest of improving their child's school attendance levels;
- Where a pupil is repeatedly caught truanting in public places during school hours (Police can also request a penalty notice be issued for this offence);
- Where a holiday in term time has been requested but has been unauthorised, in line with the 'Family Holidays in Term Time' section above.

In the first four circumstances the school will make a formal request for a fixed penalty notice to be issued, which will be considered by a senior member of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. If accepted, the AWS will,

- Send a formal written warning to the parent/carer notifying them that they may receive a fixed penalty notice and why;
- Set a period of 15 days during which the pupil must not have any unauthorised absences from school;



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- If at the end of the 15 days there has been no improvement a penalty notice will be issued via first class post;
- If there is an improvement and there are no unauthorised absences then the FPN will not be issued.
- If there is a further infringement, a FPN will be issued to that parent/carer for payment.

The level of fine is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after the 28 days but within 42 days. If the fine is still outstanding at the end of the 42 days, it will be removed and the case will progress to prosecution for non-attendance at school and not for non-payment of the fine.

Unlike the other circumstances for a fixed penalty notice, an **unauthorised holiday** absence will not be subject to a monitoring period (15 school days) for improvement to happen but a fixed penalty notice request will be automatically issued on the first day of the holiday absence. Payment will, as with other circumstances, be £60 if paid within 28 days, £120 if paid within 42 days.

Repeated absences (i.e. Persistent Absenteeism)

The school will contact the parent or carer of any pupil who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or carers will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem.

Where a child's attendance falls below 93%, a letter will be sent to the parents/carers to advise of the child's recorded attendance and to advise that the child is getting close to the monitoring period of below 90%.

Any attendance which falls below 90%, where a child is known to be in reasonable health and there are no other extenuating circumstances, is a cause for concern.

Where appropriate, procedures laid down from RCTCBC Attendance and Wellbeing Service will be followed in respect of unsatisfactory attendance (e.g. standard letters sent and recorded on the child's file with a view to any future referrals to AWS)

If the situation does not improve and the pupil's attendance drops below 86% the school will refer to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS), who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

The AWS provides 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. It helps parents and teachers to work in partnership to ensure that pupils benefit from regular attendance.

The responsibility of the Local Authority is devolved to the AWS. Where 'persistent absenteeism' continues despite input from the school, governors, supported by the AWS, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.



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Monitoring and reviewing attendance levels

- If an absence is identified as a particular problem (e.g. through the monitoring of the attendance of an identified child), the school operates a first day response i.e. if no explanation for a child's absence is received by 10am, then school attempts to contact the parent/carer.
- 'Lates' are included in this monitoring process.
- Class teachers pass concerns in relation to attendance to the school's attendance officer
- Pupil attendance is monitored at school on a weekly basis.
- Absence below 93% is reviewed and a letter sent to the family to explain that the child is getting close to the more formal 'monitoring' period.
- All absence below 90% is investigated and closely monitored for improvements
- Standard letters are sent to families to inform them of concerns regarding their child's attendance.
- Families are invited to discuss concerns with the headteacher
- Each class is informed of their weekly attendance rates.
- Whole school attendance rates are shared with parents in regular newsletters and in the Annual Governors Report to Parents.
- Records are kept to work towards identifying trends in weekly attendance
- Collected data is analysed to identify trends and introduce plans to further improve attendance.
- The school submits attendance rates to the Local Authority when requested
- The school will make attendance data available for Estyn and Welsh Government purposes.
- The school will strive to achieve targets set by the Local Authority to continue the trend of improved attendance.

Strategies for Improving Attendance

- School will follow this policy closely to ensure a fair approach is available to all pupils
- Good attendance is promoted through assemblies e.g. top class attendance celebrated
- Rewards and certificates for 100% attendance are presented on a weekly, termly and annual basis
- Any child requiring regular medication (e.g. antibiotics) are able to complete the appropriate documents at school for office staff to administer
- Newsletters clearly inform families of the need for continued good attendance.
- RCT's toolkit and Code of Conduct used consistently to support good attendance.
- Close working relationships with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service will be maintained.

Codes used for accurate register completion

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
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/	Present at registration	present
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L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (present at another school of PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity
J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based learning)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	Authorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	Unauthorised absence
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not required to attend
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend

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Codes from the "All Wales Attendance Framework"

Exceptions to be used for accurate register completion

<u>EXCEPTIONS</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>SIMS Notes Field Exemplar</u>
Music Exams	B	Music Exam. Letter provided & copied
Speech & Language Therapy	B	SALT Letter provided & Copied
Asthma Clinic	M	Asthma Clinic. Appointment card copied
Physiotherapy	M	Physiotherapy Appointment card copied
Sporting Tours	C	Tour (E.g. Rugby) and date. Evidence copied
Football Academy (With classroom learning)	B	E.g. Cardiff Academy with classroom. Letter copied
Football Academy (Without Classroom learning)	C	E.g. Swansea Academy. Letter copied
Club & National Competitions	P	Activity / Competition, Place and Date. Letter copied
Overseas Trips through Competitions	P	Activity / Competition, Place and Date. Letter copied
Travelling Time to Competitions (With letter from the Club)	C	Travelling to (Place Name) for competition . Letter copied
E-learning where there is an agreed package with the L.A	B	E-learning. Evidence Letter copied.



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Child Performance	C	Child Performance. Evidence with L.A.
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*** Any evidence provided to support code usage must be retained by school**

Useful contacts:

Attendance and Wellbeing Service
Education & Lifelong Learning
Ty Trevithick
Abercynon
Mountain Ash
RCT
CF45 4UQ
Tel: 01443 744298

AWS Service Manager

Name: Daniel Williams
Tel: 01443 744298
Email: jessica.allen@rctcbc.gov.uk

Team Leaders

Name: Kimberley-Bowditch Jones
Tel: 01443 744054
Email: Kimberley.L.Bowditch-jones@rctcbc.gov.uk
Name: Elaine Howells
Tel: 01443 744045
Email: Elaine.Howells@rctcbc.gov.uk

Team Leader (Safeguarding and Child Licensing)

Name: Elaine Howells
Tel: 01443 744045
Email: Elaine.Howells@rctcbc.gov.uk

Administrative Officer

Name: Tami Davies
Tel: 01443 744298
Email: Tami.L.Daviesmailto:@rctcbc.gov.uk