

ST. DAVID'S HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY



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Introduction

- Aims 3
- Legal Framework 3-4

The Education Wales Regulations 2013

- Definitions 4
- Role of Head teacher 5
- Governing Body 5
- Senior Management Team 5
- Heads of Year 5-6
- Form Tutors 6
- Students 6
- Parents 6
- Role of Attendance Administrator 6
- Keeping School Registers 7
- Types of Absences 7
- Punctuality/ Lateness 7
- Medical Absences 8
- Holidays During Term Time 8
- School Procedures 8-9
- Children Missing Education 9

School Strategies to improve attendance

- Pupil Involvement 9
- School Websites 9
- School Newsletters 9
- The School Environment 10
- Staff Awareness 10
- Attendance Assemblies 10
- Transition Process 10
- Parents Evening 10
- School Sanctions 10-11
- Rewards 11
- First Day Contact/ Truancy call 11
- Data Collection 11
- Monitoring and Reporting 11

Appendix 1 - Codes

12

St David's High School is committed to ensuring that regular attendance at school is a priority, which will in turn provide students with the best possible chances to succeed and to achieve their goals.

Regular school attendance is essential for all children and young people. Failure to regularly attend can increase the risk of leaving school without any qualifications, and can also increase the likelihood of students being drawn into criminal and anti-social behaviour.

St David's High School will endeavour to work with parents, and students to ensure that all students receive appropriate support to enable them attend school regularly.

This attendance policy reflects the Local Authority's School Attendance expectations.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure that attendance and punctuality remains a key focus for all students. St David's High School will;

- Offer a safe and friendly environment which welcomes children regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or ability
- Raise standards and ensure all students reach their full potential through a high level of school attendance and punctuality
- Ensure all stakeholders receive communication and information about the importance of regular school attendance
- Keep accurate and up to date attendance data
- Regularly scrutinise attendance data
- Identify those students with irregular attendance at an early stage and work with the Local Authority and partner agencies to address any issues that may stop students from attending school regularly
- Ensure that all students are safe and ensure all schools follow the Local Authority's Children Missing Education (CME) guidance
- Reward those students who have made significant progress in raising attendance levels

This document is supported by the All Wales Attendance Framework.

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/pupilsupport/framework/?lang=en>

Legal Framework

The Law that requires regular school attendance is:

The Education Act 1996. This Act and any amendments place a legal obligation on:

- The Local Authority to provide services that enforce attendance.
- Schools to maintain an up to date and accurate register of pupil attendance and notify the Local Authority of a child's absence in accordance with local protocols (See Appendix).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that:

'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient, full time education suitable to his/her age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational 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'.

School Attendance Orders (SAO):

Under the Education Act 1996 section 437- 443 a School Attendance Order applies when a parent of compulsory school age fails to prove that the child is receiving a suitable education and where the Local 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.

The Education (Penalty Notice) Wales Regulations 2013:

This legislation came into force in September 2014 and has given Local authorities powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN). A code of conduct has been agreed by Flintshire County Council which allows Head Teachers to apply for a £60 FPN when they have recorded the following on the school register.

- Minimum of 10 unauthorised absences in the current term (These absences do not have to be consecutive)
- Minimum of 10 sessions of lateness after the close of registration.
- Parents/carers failing to engage with school/EWO but where prosecution has not yet been instigated

The Headteacher must be able to demonstrate that all efforts to address the absences have been made and that the process has been administered robustly within the school before any decision is made to apply for a FPN. Evidence of Absences Letters 1, 2 and 3 must be submitted with all FPN applications. The Head Teacher must inform the parent/carer by letter that a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice will be made.

Support and advice with regard to FPN applications will be provided by a dedicated Education Support Officer within the EWO Service. All FPN's will be delivered by hand and all outcomes will be reported to the Headteacher.

The Senior Learning Advisor for Engagement will oversee the FPN process and ensure the application meets the requirements of Flintshire County Councils Code of Conduct.

The decision to progress an application for an FPN is entirely that of the individual Headteacher. It is Flintshire County Councils policy to progress all unpaid FPN cases for Parental Prosecution (provided that Unauthorised Absences persist and that the case meets the legal threshold for a Parental Prosecution).

The Education Wales Regulations 2013

Definitions

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 following their fifth birthday.
- A young person ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have achieved their 16th birthday.

'Parents' are defined in section 576 of the Education Act 1996 as:

- All natural parents whether married or not.
- Any person who although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.
- Any person, who although not a natural parent has care of a child or young person.

Outline of Attendance roles at St David's High School

Attendance is everybody's concern and the school will expect all stakeholders to play a part in improving attendance.

Role of Head Teacher

- To be responsible for overall management and implementation of this policy
- Work closely with the school's Governing Body
- Set attendance targets with the Challenge Advisors and Governors
- To use discretion when receiving applications for holiday requests and to provide reasons to parents
- To obtain regular attendance reports and for these to be shared with Governors.
- To work closely with the Local Authority's Senior Learning Advisor- Engagement and the EWO Team Manager
- To notify the Local Authority when a child is missing education and to follow the Local Authority's CME Policy
- To ensure the schools' own Attendance Policy is up to date. To ensure this policy is readily available for parents and is displayed prominently on the school's website
- To work with Supporting Improvement Advisors (SIA) and to provide evidence of attendance processes across the whole school
- To set and review Attendance Targets in accordance with the WG All Wales Attendance Framework expectations

Role of the Governing Body

- To approve the Attendance Policy and to ensure it is updated annually
- To receive attendance reports from the Head Teacher on a regular basis
- To ensure the Attendance Policy is shared with all relevant stakeholders
- Ensure a Lead Governor for attendance matters is appointed
- Attend meetings as and when required

Role of the Senior Leadership Team

- Work with all staff responsible for attendance and punctuality
- Scrutinise school attendance data on a regular basis and profile missing register marks
- Regularly check registers have been marked at registration
- Ensure all absences are recorded in line with the WG Guidance on School Attendance Codes document <https://gov.wales/school-attendance-codes-guidance>
- Regularly update training on attendance for all relevant staff and provide guidance to supply/temporary staff
- Monitor staff performance with regard to registration practices and address any deficits
- Discuss potential initiatives to improve attendance with all staff and engage key staff in developing these initiatives

Role of the Heads of Year

- Ensure all pupil absences are recorded and followed up
- Ensure that registers are completed on a daily basis
- Work closely with the school's attendance administration officer
- Work closely with the schools allocated EWO/ESO and ensure that a dedicated attendance meeting take place regularly to discuss cases

- Contact parents/carers or guardians of those students who have not attended regularly
- Ensure any truancy concerns are dealt with in line with school policy
- Arrange letters to be sent and meetings arranged with those parents whose children's attendance is identified as a concern
- Regularly monitor patterns of irregular attendance and interview pupils
- Provide rewards to those students with improved or excellent attendance
- Discuss attendance related issues in school assembly on a regular basis and ensure students are aware of the fact that school have applied rewards and sanctions

Role of the Form Tutors

- To carry out the statutory role of completing attendance registers twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon
- Ensure absences are accounted for by ways of a note provided by parents
- Follow up unaccounted reasons for absence and refer concerns to the Head of Year as early as possible
- Continue to raise the profile of attendance to all students as part of a whole school approach
- Contact the school Attendance Administrator with any queries/updates and ensure these are placed on SIMS system as a FLAG so that communication is clear across the school

Role of the Student

The Student is responsible for maintaining good attendance and punctuality. He / she / they will:

- Sign the attendance agreement and keep to the school's expectations
- Bring a note of explanation from parents / guardians when they return to school after an absence
- Sign in at Reception in the event of late arrival
- Sign out at Reception if he / she they need to leave during the school day, providing the Office Staff with confirmation that he / she they have permission from their Parents / Head of Year to leave school
- Inform school council of any ideas that may improve individual or class attendance

Role of the Parents/Guardians

- The parent/ guardian is legally responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any additional educational needs the child may have
- Must ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually
- Must notify the school if their child is unable to attend on the first day of absence and regularly thereafter
- Must keep the school updated of the parents/guardians contact details, including mobile numbers, email and new addresses
- Work with school and partner agencies to address any issues of irregular attendance of their children
- Work with their child in relation to homework and distance learning initiatives (Failure to completing homework is not a reason to allow a child to miss school)

Role of the Attendance Administrator

- To speak with parents on a daily basis to establish reasons for pupil's absence
- To record absences daily in the register as and when required
- To profile missing marks and to input reasons for absence on the SIMS system as a FLAG
- Contact parents by Text/phone/email to inform them of absence and seek an explanation in a timely fashion every day
- Work closely with EWO Service and support staff in school
- To work with SLT and Head Teacher closely
- To ensure transfer of CTF of student is completed in a timely manner and students are not removed from roll unnecessarily
- Regularly monitor school's answerphone, inbox or text messaging system and update FLAG on SIMS to reflect the information

Keeping school registers

The school's register is a legal document and under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 the school is required to keep an accurate record of attendance.

Registers must to be marked twice a day (once in the morning and once in the afternoon) to ensure students are safeguarded.

Registers and Registration Certificates must be accurate as they are required as evidence when EWO service takes legal action.

Schools Information Management System (SIMS) is used in schools across Flintshire County Council to record all pupils' attendance.

By the end of the school week, the school's overall attendance registers must be completed to ensure an overall attendance figure can be calculated by the school.

Types of absences

It is important for parents to understand the definition of the different types of absences. They are classed as **unauthorised absence** and **authorised absence**

The schools Head Teacher is the only person that should determine whether an absence is authorised or remains unauthorised.

Absences maybe authorised for the following reasons;

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Medical/Dental appointments during school hours
- Fixed term and permanent exclusions
- Holiday agreed by the Head Teacher and Governing Body
- Agreed Flexi schooling
- Legitimate Dual Registration

Absences should remain unauthorised for the following reasons (Not Comprehensive):

- Truancy
- Late after the close of registration
- Staying at home for no legitimate reason – condoned absence

- Shopping for school uniform
- Birthdays
- Holiday not agreed by the Head Teacher or Governing Body
-

In addition, there are several codes classed as a present mark which include the following:

- Late before the close of register
- Educated off site, students attending vocational courses at college/students attending alternative provision agreed by school
- Sporting activity
- Educational visit
- Traveller absence
- Interview
- Work experience

Please see appendix 1 which includes a breakdown of codes set by Welsh Government.

Punctuality/ Lateness

Punctuality is a legal requirement and students must attend on time. Persistent lateness has a detrimental effect on a child's learning and also disrupts other students within the class and throughout the school.

Those parents of students who are persistently late will be contacted by the Form Tutor/Head of Year/Senior Management Team in accordance with processes described earlier.

All students who are late must sign in on the 'Signing in Machine' in Reception and must enter through the main doors of the school to ensure they are accounted for.

Persistent Lateness

The following interventions will be put in place for any learner identified as being a persistent offender for morning lates:

Guardians will be notified of our concerns.

The Attendance Strategy Officer (ASO) and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be notified.

Learners will be detained on the day they are late after school for a MINIMUM of 30 minutes regardless of how late they were.

If they are later than 30 minutes they will make up every minute that they are late.

Refusal of detentions will result in a C4 net referral the following which includes an hour after school.

Refusal of NET will lead to a fixed term exclusion.

If a learner is later than 9:30 am they will be coded as unauthorised for the morning session which could lead to a fixed penalty notice (FPN).

Medical absences

Where a student is continually absent from school for medical reasons it will be necessary for the parent to provide medical evidence (e.g. certificate or letter from recognised medical service) to St David's High School. This will be requested by the school and may result in the pupil and family receiving appropriate support to enable the student to attend school regularly.

There may be times where a Reintegration PSP / Attendance Improvement Plan may be necessary which will be arranged in partnership with the family, student, relevant support service and school.

Any student that experiences long term absence for medical reasons can be considered for Home Tuition in accordance with the published Flintshire County Council EOTAS Policy.

Holidays during term time

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw students from school during the school term for a holiday. Under the Education (Pupil Registration Wales) Regulations 2010, Head Teachers have discretion to authorise a holiday of up to 10 days during term time. Any holiday in excess of 10 days should only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

All requests for holidays must be completed on the schools holiday request form and completed by the parents/guardians. (Please see Appendix 2 for model form).

The Head Teacher will make the decision and should take account of the following contributory factors:

- Time of year
- Length of time
- Overall percentage of attendance
- Impact on the child's learning

School procedures

Parents are expected to contact school on the first day of absence and to provide reasons for their child's absence. This communication can be done through email, text or by phoning the school office.

If parents fail to notify school, then the school will make every effort to contact the parents and also other persons listed as a point of contact via a Truancy Call System. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if no contact is made. Failure to receive any contact on the third day of absence may result in the involvement of the EWO Service.

Children Missing Education

Schools have a duty to safeguard all pupils. The Education & Inspections Act 2006, requires the Local Authority to make arrangements to enable them to establish the identities of children residing within Flintshire who are not receiving an education. These may be students who have not attended school for an excessive amount of time without any contact or reason for the absence.

The duty lies with the Local Authority to investigate further in accordance with the published Flintshire County Councils CME Policy.

Students should not be removed from the school register until the pupil has been admitted to another school/ PRU or until the CME document has been completed and recorded by the LA.

St David's High School Strategies to Improve Attendance

St David's High School's aim is that all students achieve 100% attendance. However, there may be instances where students are unable to attend for genuine reasons.

Pupil Involvement

Students could be nominated to become school councillors, mentors and mediators in order to assist other students to improve their attendance levels.

School's Websites

The school's website should also provide parents, pupils, governors and the public with all the relevant attendance information. This should include the school's Attendance Policy, along with all other schools' policies and procedures

School's Newsletters

A Newsletter (or the digital equivalent) is another useful way of communicating with parents. Good practice in Flintshire includes schools where newsletters are sent out on a half termly basis/weekly basis. Newsletters can inform parents and students of current school strategies and expectations and can highlight current overall attendance figures/targets.

Parents and carers should be encouraged to check the school's attendance information on a regular basis and also check on school holiday dates/ inset dates to avoid confusion.

The School Environment

The school should provide a happy, welcoming and organised environment to ensure all students enjoy learning. It is good practice for all staff to ensure that classroom displays include the form/class attendance for the previous week and the schools' targets.

Staff Awareness

All staff must be fully aware of the importance of regular school attendance. Students should be consistently reminded of the importance of regular school attendance during the school day. A holistic and consistent approach should be applied across the school to ensure that all staff reinforce the school ethos and reflect the culture of the school at all times.

Attendance Assemblies

Celebrating attendance should be a priority. Involving students in this process provides incentive, motivation and encouragement. Assembly can promote a sense of self-worth and wellbeing for children. An Attendance Assembly can be used to reward for their achievements.

These assemblies can sometimes be delivered formally or informally. Prevention and Support Services can be invited to support these assemblies and to promote attendance initiatives.

Transition Process

Transition from Year 6 to 7 can be a challenging time for many pupils. It is essential that the transition process underlines the expectations with regard to school attendance and punctuality. Cases where school attendance has been a concern should be highlighted as part of transition arrangements.

The EWO service can be contacted/consulted for support. Early intervention at transition can be more effective than later engagements where school attendance matters are concerned

Parent's Evening

Parent's evenings are an opportunity to discuss attendance concerns as well as other school related matters. Parents can be signposted to support services for advice and guidance to ensure that they understand the benefits that result from regular school attendance.

School Sanctions

St David's High School adopts a graduated response to school attendance concerns. Letters highlighting absence and lateness should be an embedded part of school processes. Students that persistently fail to respond to support and encouragement can be made the subject of after school engagement or sanction.

Parents should be involved in all such responsive activities, and a collaborative approach to addressing attendance concerns is always the recommended starting point. Parents that fail to engage in such collaborative approaches can be made the subject of FPN or legal processes as stated within this policy.

Rewards

Rewards can include the following:

- Pupil Certificate.
- Reward Trips
- 100% awards for the academic year for pupils

First Day contact/ Truancy Call

School should operate a first day contact process to confirm why a child is absent when no suitable explanation has been received. This process is deemed to be good practice and is an essential part of a robust safeguarding process within a school. Such students can then be referred to support services in accordance with the terms of this policy.

Data Collection

School's attendance data is continually being tracked and monitored electronically both on an individual pupil level and also as a whole school. This data is collated by the Local Authority and shared with the SLA Engagement and the EWO Manager on a regular basis.

Contact with Heads and school's staff where data clarification is required is an established part of LA function. Such practice is intended to foster positive dialogues with schools in a collaborative manner at the earliest opportunity.

Appendix 1

Code	Meaning	Statistical meaning
/\	Present at registration	Present
L	Late but arrived before register closed	Present
B	Educated off-site	Approved educational activity
D	Dual registered	Approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved educational activity
V	Educational trip or visit	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 code)	Authorised absence

F	Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	Authorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
M	Medical/dental appointment	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
E	Exclusion	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
T	Traveller Absence	Authorised absence
N	No reason provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (no explanation provided)	Unauthorised absence
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late arrival after the close of registration	Unauthorised absence
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non- compulsory school age	Not required to attend
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend