
POLICY TITLE:	Attendance – Wales
Policy Number:	ACS61A
Applies to:	All Welsh schools
Version Number:	V02
Date of Issue:	05/08/2024
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Author:	Charlie Rivers – Head of Quality (Education)
Ratified by:	Charlie Rivers – Head of Quality (Education)
Responsible signatory:	Jane Stone – Director of Governance and Risk
Outcome:	This policy aims to ensure that all Aspris Welsh Schools meet their statutory requirements with regards to recording and reporting school attendance.
Cross Reference:	AOP06 Safeguarding Children in Education AOP06B Safeguarding Children in Education - Wales ACS04A Positive Behaviour Support - Wales

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Aspris is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any protected characteristics and all will be treated with dignity and respect.

In order to ensure that this policy is relevant and up to date, comments and suggestions for additions or amendments are sought from users of this document. To contribute towards the process of review, email AsprisGovernanceHelpdesk@Aspris.com.

Attendance - Wales

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In order to effectively implement this policy, each Aspris Welsh school will have a local procedure in place where necessary, which explain how this policy is applied and put into practice at service level.
- 1.2 Template **ACS LP 61** is provided for this purpose and includes a key content checklist.
- 1.3 This policy should be used in conjunction with the related policies listed on the preceding page where applicable.

2 AIMS

- 2.1 Aspris is committed to ensuring that all schools both meet their statutory obligations pertaining to attendance whilst also promoting a culture and ethos that values good attendance. This includes:
- Offering a safe and friendly environment which welcomes children regardless of race, gender or ability
 - Promoting good attendance
 - Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
 - Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled and, in doing so, reaching their full potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality
 - Acting early to address patterns of absence
 - Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
 - Working with partner agencies to try and address any barriers that stop learners from attending school regularly
 - Following the local authority's 'Children Missing Education' guidance in order to ensure that all children are safe
 - Promoting and supporting punctuality with regard to attendance in lessons

3 OVERVIEW

- 3.1 The Welsh Assembly Government's policies for children and young people have their basis in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe it is vital that children and young people have access to appropriate and effective learning opportunities and provision. Any barriers to learning need to be identified early and removed, so that children and young people can engage in educational provision they need to achieve their full potential. A child's success at school is likely to be affected negatively by poor attendance. Those who do not attend regularly may not be able to keep up with their work and in a busy school day it can sometimes be difficult for schools to find the extra time needed to help a child catch up. In addition, research shows that children who are not in school are more vulnerable and can be easily drawn into crime and anti-social behaviour and are more likely to be unemployed after leaving school
- 3.2 This policy meets the requirements of 'Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education' (March 2017) and follows guidance provided by the All Wales Attendance Framework

4 SCOPE

- 4.1 This policy applies to all Welsh schools within the Education division.

5 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 **The Regional Director** (as Chair of Governors) is responsible for:
- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure colleagues receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

5.2 **The Head Teacher** is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting colleagues with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

5.3 **The designated Colleague (usually a senior leader responsible for attendance)** is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school colleagues and reporting concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Working with Local Authority officers to tackle persistent absence
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

5.4 **The Class Teachers** are responsible for:

- Recording pupil attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information according to school local procedure

5.5 **Designated School colleagues** (Usually admin/office colleagues) are responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents/carers absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Where appropriate, transferring calls from parents/carers to the necessary person (see School Local Procedure) in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

5.6 **Parents/carers** are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every (day/timetabled session) on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before established time (see Local Procedure) on the day of the absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

5.7 **Pupils** are expected to:

- Attend school every day (according to individualised curriculum) on time

6 RECORDING ATTENDANCE

6.1 All schools must use the Aspris Electronic Recording System to record attendance and ensure that all pupils are placed onto this register

6.2 All schools must take their attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the afternoon session utilising the appropriate attendance codes (see Guidance on school attendance codes – Welsh Government). It must mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-service educational activity

- Absent
 - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- 6.3 Any amendment to the attendance register must include:
- The original entry
 - The amended entry
 - The reason for the amendment
 - The date on which the amendment was made
 - The name and position of the person who made the amendment
- 6.4 All schools must also record:
- (For pupils of compulsory school age] Whether the absence is authorised or not
 - If a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
 - The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- 6.5 Schools Local Attendance Procedure must detail
- The time at which pupils must arrive in school
 - The time at which the register for both the first and second session will be taken
 - The amount of time the register will be kept open in both sessions

7 UNPLANNED ABSENCE

- 7.1 The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by XXXX (time determined by Local Procedure) or as soon as practically possible
- 7.2 The school must mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless they have a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness
- 7.3 Where the absence is longer than xxx days (number determined by Local Procedure) or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school can ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence
- 7.4 If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence can be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance

8 PLANNED ABSENCE

- 8.1 Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Schools should encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, schools should request that the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.
- 8.2 The pupil's parent/carer should also be encouraged to apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 12 below details which term-time absences the school can authorise

9 LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY

- 9.1 A pupil who arrives late:
- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
 - After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- 9.2 The school Local Procedure will detail how the school will identify and respond to ongoing punctuality issues

10 FOLLOWING UP UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

- 10.1 Where any pupil expected to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school is expected to:
- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will follow what is detailed in their Local Procedure
 - Identify whether the absence is approved or not
 - Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
 - Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary

11 REPORTING TO PARENTS/CARERS

- 11.1 Schools must regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels (details to be given in Local Procedure)

12 AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

12.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school's Local Procedure will provide a description of what constitutes exceptional circumstances.

- 12.2 The school must consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request

- 12.3 Parents should be requested to submit any request for authorised absence as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, in accordance with any leave of absence request form (details pertaining to this to be contained in the school's Local Procedure). The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence

- 12.4 Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong.
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

13 STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

- 13.1 The school should have strategies for rewarding and improving attendance. These will be detailed in their Local Procedure

14 ATTENDANCE MONITORING

- 14.1 The school must monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance. These will be detailed in their Local Procedure

- 14.2 As a minimum the school must

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

- 14.3 The school should compare attendance data with the national average, and share this as part of reporting to Governance
- 14.4 The school must
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
 - Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- 14.5 The school must use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- 15 **PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE**
- 15.1 Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school
- 15.2 The school must
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
 - Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- 15.3 The school's Local Procedure will provide details of further support in place to support/challenge pupils with persistent and severe absence

Associated Forms:

ACS LP 61 Attendance

References:

Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education - March 2017
Guidance on school attendance codes - June 2010
All Wales Attendance Framework Nov 2012