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Rhondda Cynon Taf Attendance Policy

This policy takes account of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service Tool kit in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The policy statement below summarises the content and approach taken by the 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)

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

Introduction

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Pupils must be punctual for registration at the following times:

Morning registration 9.00 am (reg closes 9.30 am)

Afternoon registration at 1.30 pm for PS3, 1pm for PS1 and 2.

For any pupil who arrives after the registration period, an unauthorised late mark will be issued.

Late procedures

Pupils who arrive at school after the start of the morning session, must be signed in at the main office by completing the 'Pupil in' section on the tablet in the main school foyer.



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Attendance is monitored half termly and any issues are identified by the AWO (Attendance and Wellbeing Officer) and school.

Registers

The accuracy of the register is important in order to support any statutory intervention that may be required.

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

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

We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

The school follows the regulation of the Welsh Government and guidelines from the RCT. The governing body are responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

2 Definitions

2.1 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 guardian. 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.

2.2 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.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.



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An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school due to a holiday that was not agreed by the head teacher under his/her discretion.

3 If a child is absent

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.

The school needs to be notified of **ALL** absences and associated reasons. This is a **legal requirement** and we need to code the child's absence appropriately. Please call the school office **(01443) 237833**, choosing option 1, and leave a message. When leaving your reason please be specific i.e.: **stomach bug, headache etc.**

Leaving 'unwell' or 'won't be in today or this week' will result in the school calling you to ascertain a reason. Should your child be suffering from vomiting or diarrhoea, they must stay off school for **48 hours following the last bout of illness.**

The school admin assistant will collate the names of pupils absent without reason and will endeavour to contact a parent or guardian by telephone under our first day response procedures.

Requests for holidays

At Pontyclun Primary, we believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances under which a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, e.g. a special event.

Authorised Holidays

The school (Governing Body) uses its discretion to authorise pupils' absence from school for holidays up to 10 days in one academic year during the school term, in accordance with Welsh Government guidelines.

The school (Governing Body) will authorise holidays under the following circumstances:

- The holiday falls into one of the 'exceptional circumstances' listed in the RCT guidance below;
- Families of serving armed forces personnel;
- Parent or child experiencing a life limiting illness;
- Families that have suffered an acute trauma;
- Attendance at the time of the holiday is above 95.2% for the year up to the date the holiday starts. (this is the school attendance target and is subject to change year on year);
- Is NOT more than 10 days in one academic year;
- Is NOT in the first week of the new September term;
- There have been no exclusions in the previous 3 terms;



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- Requests for holidays must be received at least a week before the start of the holiday.

Holidays requested well in advance will be granted in principle but the decision to mark them authorised or unauthorised will depend on the above criteria being met on the date the holiday starts. Each request will be considered on its own merits and may be unauthorised

Holidays that are marked unauthorised will be issued with a fixed penalty notice in line with RCT guidelines.

Unauthorised holidays

The school has adopted the guidelines as set out the RCT Toolkit for Attendance and Wellbeing. All unauthorised holidays will be referred to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and issued with a fixed penalty notice.

Long-term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given further support outside school.

Repeated unauthorised absences

The school has adopted the procedure as stated in the RCT Attendance Toolkit document. This is as follows:

The school will contact the parent, or guardian, via letter, of any pupil who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve and the pupil's attendance drops below 90% within the previous 6 week period, the school will then refer to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS), who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians 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 governors, supported by the AWS, reserve



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the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis

Fixed Penalty Notices

In accordance with the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, RCT introduced fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for regular non-attendance at school during 2014/15 academic year, with the local authority Code of Conduct officially adopted as of the 1st September 2014. This was last revised in August 2023 and can be found here:

[FixedPenaltyNoticeforNonAttendanceatschoolCodeofConduct.pdf \(rctcbc.gov.uk\)](https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/FixedPenaltyNoticeforNonAttendanceatschoolCodeofConduct.pdf)

The criteria for which the FPNs can be issued are:

- Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in the current term (these do not need to be consecutive) which may or may not include pupils who are persistently arriving after the close of the registration period (Recommended that registers be kept open for thirty minutes);
- Parental non-engagement with the school and/or AWS relating to attendance matters;
- Truancing in a public place during school hours (requested by Police);
- Any number of unauthorised holiday absences during the current term.

Please be aware that you can now 'mix' the codes for a FPN referral, e.g. you could request an FPN for 6 O codes and 4 U codes, as long as they total 10 or more.

In order for a school to be able to request an FPN to be issued, their Attendance Policy, and any supporting documents, must include a reference to the use of the scheme within the school. To assist, a template paragraph has been provided to the school to indicate the type of inclusion that should be made to the policy. This must be ratified and adopted by the Governing Body prior to an FPN being issued.

Schools are encouraged to consider a fixed penalty notice as part of their graduated response to tackling absence where other avenues have been explored without success. The AWS realises that penalty notices will not be appropriate in all circumstances, but each individual case should be considered as attendance declines.

Any school requesting a fixed penalty notice should do so as soon as possible and not 'batch' penalty notice requests for submission at the end of the term. 'Batching' can lead to penalty notices being issued in an untimely manner, not addressing the issue at the time of the absences. Furthermore, if supporting evidence is not robust, it may be difficult for a school to gather the necessary evidence several weeks/months after the period of unauthorised absence.



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Rewards for good attendance

- All the children who have 100 per cent attendance in any one half term will receive an excellence certificate for attendance
- There are special certificates for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year.

100% attendance for the year special award:

All children with 100% attendance for a year will receive a certificate and be entered into a prize draw. Prizes will be subject to change on a yearly basis.

Parents

Parents are reminded of the importance of attendance through newsletters and the website and RCT campaigns.

Attendance targets

The school is set attendance targets each year by the Local Authority. The school strives to achieve these challenging targets.

Monitoring and review

- It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.
- The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years. The rates of attendance will be reported in the school prospectus, and in the annual governors' report to parents.
- The school clerk and the headteacher will be responsible for monitoring attendance in the school and for following up absences in the appropriate way.
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The school has agreed that it is the responsibility of the school to

- monitor pupil attendance on a weekly basis;
- monitor overall attendance on a half-termly (six week) basis;
- send letters to parents for attendance under 90%
- submit attendance rates to the LA on a half-termly (six week) basis;
- liaise with the LEA to discuss targets to improve attendance; and
- for Estyn and Welsh Government Purposes, make attendance data available.



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If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service, who will contact the parents or guardians.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

This policy was written in consultation with staff and Pontyclun Primary school governing body and was approved on :-

Date: 11/10/24

This policy will be reviewed on: Summer 2026

Signed: Head teacher [Signature]

Signed: Chair of Governors [Signature]

