





Gwaunfarren Primary School

Attendance Policy

Autumn 2025

Attendance Policy

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Introduction

Gwaunfarren Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

School's roles and responsibilities

All staff (teaching and support) at Gwaunfarren Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality. The school will work closely with families of those children who have poor attendance. Weekly phonecalls/ meetings will be agreed. For those identified for persistent absenteeism meetings will be planned and clear action plans written - these will be done with the support of the LA.

Attendance Leader

At Gwaunfarren Primary School, the Head teacher (as Attendance Leader), will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. He will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with relevant personnel; pupils and parents are regularly reminded about the importance of good school attendance and data may be used to reinforce this. A report is prepared for the governing body, termly. He will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

Target Setting

At the beginning of each academic year the LA will set an attendance target with the headteacher. This target will be generated based on the previous years target and attendance data. The Headteacher and Governing Body will then set the school attendance target. This target will be shared with staff, pupils and parents. School staff will encourage attendance and promote the school attendance target in their daily practice. After analysing data, individual class targets maybe set, with interventions used to support particular concerns.

Registration

The school is required to mark the attendance register **twice** each day; once at the start of the school day and once at the start of the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers; administrative staff add prescribed codes for absence.

The register will be called promptly at 9.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. by each class teacher and a mark will be made in respect of each child.

The registers will close at 9.10 a.m. and 1.10 p.m. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent, unless the school is informed otherwise. Pupils who arrive late but before the register closes will be counted as present but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

Categorising absences

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is **not** present at this time will be marked as having **unauthorised** absence, unless leave has been granted by the school in advance, or the reason for the absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.

Gwaunfarren Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Gwaunfarren Primary School will then challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school. If no explanation about an absence is received by the school within 1 week, the absence will remain unauthorised;

Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:

Where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –

- A pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
- A pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence, the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.
- Where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the pupil has had a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their

child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);

- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong;
- The pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel,
- The pupil/student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
- In other exceptional circumstances (e.g. family bereavement) and for a very limited period.

Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence would be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is staying at home to mind the house;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

Approved educational activity

Where a pupil is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will enter the appropriate code in the register.

Class Registers

The Education (Pupil Registration Wales) Regulations 2010, stipulate that an attendance register **MUST** be taken at the commencement of each morning session and once during the afternoon session. Schools should take the afternoon register at the start of the afternoon session to enable a more rapid response to absence and to encourage punctuality.

Staff Training

The school attendance leader (Mr Lewis/Mrs Francis - Clerk) will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receives sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

Collection and analysis of data

The attendance leader will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to relevant school personnel, Local Authority, parent/carers and governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored for each pupil; where relevant, it is analysed and discussed with all appropriate parties.

Accurate attendance returns are made to Welsh Government within the stipulated time-frame.

Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at Gwaunfarren Primary School and is discussed at assemblies, governor attendance, meetings for parents/carers and in governor meetings. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

Gwaunfarren Primary School has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences, within the day. Staff endeavour to make contact with the families concerned; if necessary a follow-up letter is written by the Head teacher and a meeting convened. Advice is sought from the Education Welfare Service when the matter cannot be resolved.

To positively reinforce and express value for good attendance, our end of term assembly highlights children with 100% attendance and rewards them with a certificate/local trip. The school may also issue rewards for most improved attendance. Every Friday, during achievement assembly, the class with the best attendance is announced and graphs are distributed and displayed in every class to show the progress and encourage the competition between classes.

To engage in the **Callio Attendance Campaign** to remind all parents of the importance of school attendance and our commitment to the pupils. We ask all parents to set the highest of expectations for attendance for the term and year ahead. Parents will be updated on their child's attendance on a half-termly basis.

First Day Response

Gwaunfarren Primary School has in place a system of first-day response calling system. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation, to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence, or who may be absent without their parent's knowledge. Any reasons given for will be entered into the SIMS database in order to help identify any trends that may occur.

Meetings with parents

Where there is an emerging pattern to pupil's absence over 3 to 4 week period (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without permission, the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans are put in place with the parents/carers, and pupil, to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It is explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Referral to the Education Welfare Service

If there continue to be unauthorised absences, or unsatisfactory reasons for absence, the matter will be referred to the LA who may also be involved in parent meetings.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:

- Holidays. The school will permit holidays for 10 days, these will be recorded as a H for the first 5 days and then 'G' for anything after. After 10 days unauthorised absence linked to holiday the school will refer to the EWS, and a fine maybe issued. A fine will be issued after day 10. A FPN will only be issued if a period of 5 days holiday is taken in that term.
- 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;

Before a Penalty Notice is issued, you will receive a written warning outlining the extent of your child's absence and the possibility of you receiving a Penalty Notice. A period of 15 days is offered to improve the attendance and if there are NO unauthorised absences recorded during this fifteen day timescale then the FPN will not be issued. (The 15 day warning period does NOT apply to an FPN issued for an unauthorised holiday absence.)

There is no limit to the number of times a warning notice may be issued. More than one FPN may be issued in a school year.

How much is the fine?

£60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice rising to £120 if paid within 42 days of receipt. It will be at the discretion of the local authority whether to issue an FPN on one or both parents/carers.

How to pay

The Penalty Notice will be sent by first class post to your home address and information on how to pay will be included.

What happens if you don't pay?

If you do not pay the penalty in full within the maximum allowed timescale of 42 days of issue, the local authority will be obliged to start legal proceedings against you for an offence under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996 i.e. for failing to ensure regular school attendance This may lead to an appearance in the Magistrates court and result in a fine of up to £1,000 per parent per child.

Can you appeal?

No. There is no statutory right of appeal. Once a Fixed Penalty Notice has been issued it can only be withdrawn if it can be shown that it was issued in error.

Can I still be prosecuted if I pay the FPN?

You cannot be prosecuted for the same period of absence identified in the Fixed Penalty Notice but you may be subsequently prosecuted for further periods of unauthorised absences from school.

Each case is considered on an individual basis.

Why is attendance at school so important?

- Good attendance increases attainment and achievement
- Good attendance improves opportunities
- Good attendance supports children and young people and keeps them safer
- Attending school reduces the risks attached to absenteeism

Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in the correct room for registration, on time every day. Pupils are allowed to enter their classrooms, between 8:45 and 9:00am. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be dealt with by the Head/school secretary. A pupil who is persistently late will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the LA where a fine may be issued.

Where a pupil arrives late for school, but before the register closes parents/carers are asked for reasons for the lateness. Persistent lateness will be followed up by a letter/meeting with those concerned and strategies suggested to improve the matter. For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the office. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.

For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day, are collected from/returned to the office. Parents do not go to the classrooms.

Parent/carer responsibilities

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Gwaunfarren Primary School.

Gwaunfarren Primary School expects parents/carers to:

- Ensure their children attend the school regularly
- Support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum
- Not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents/carers will also be expected to:

- Notify Gwaunfarren Primary School on the first day of absence, a telephone call is sufficient. We ask that children are not asked to relay a message about another child's absence, or reason for it.
- Ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day.
- Work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities.
- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Gwaunfarren Primary School will endeavour to support parents to address any concerns.

Pupils' responsibility

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

Pupils should attend their classes on time, ready to learn. Parents may wish to confirm the reasons for any absence by sending in a letter when the child returns to school. In cases of prolonged absence, a letter maybe requested, in addition to the telephone call. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

Governors' responsibility

The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangement for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Conclusion

Regular school attendance is necessary.

Be healthy –

- Attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development

Stay safe –

- Schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- The best way to safeguarding children is to ensure they attend school regularly

Enjoy and achieve –

- Good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoy the fulfilment this brings

Make a positive contribution –

- Membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others

Achieve economic well-being –

- Good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

A Guide For Parents

1. When does my child need to be in school?

Your child should be at school in good time for registration. The morning register will be called promptly at 9.00 a.m. and the afternoon register at 1.00p.m.

2. What happens if my child is late?

If your child arrives after 9.00 a.m. he/she will be marked late.

Pupils who arrive late should report to the school office accompanied by parents/carers. If a pupil is regularly arriving late at school, a meeting will be arranged with a member of staff to discuss reasons/difficulties for lateness. If this continues, with no improvement a fine may be issued.

Unacceptable reasons for lateness include – alarm clock didn't go off, siblings were running late, getting fuel for car, overslept, clock wrong, running late, disorganised, child's behaviour.

3. Does the school need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence, preferably by 9.15 a.m. If you do not phone us, we will phone or text you. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be shown on your child's end of year report. A follow up letter is not obligatory, but may be requested in cases of prolonged absence. **Persistent failure to contact the school will result in the Education Inclusion Officer becoming involved.**

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (please make a routine appointment after school or during the holidays)
- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement

5. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, additional days to extend holiday, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters.

1. I am thinking about taking my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip

to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family, where this is their country of origin. Contact the Head teacher as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school recommends that such absences do not take place during school time.

2. **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education.

3. **My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?**

Contact your child's class teacher or Head teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.