



**Marlborough Primary
School
Attendance Policy 2021**

Introduction and aims

All children should attend school every day, as long as they are fit and healthy to do so. The school's duty is to provide an environment where all young people can flourish as a member of a happy, caring and safe community and we encourage positive attitudes to school and learning. It is our goal that each child attends school regularly and on time, making the most of the opportunities available to them.

Attendance of every pupil is taken seriously and we aim to make the best provision for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Whilst we all recognise that the on-going pandemic has a direct impact on the implementation of the attendance policy. Guidance from Welsh Government and TTP is followed very closely and isolation periods for pupils remain a reality for many of our pupils. As such, we take a nuanced approach to monitoring pupil attendance, very much taking the consideration of the pandemic into context.

The school aims to:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- Ensure compliance with all statutory requirements;
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure consistency;

We will communicate frequently with parents and carers by;

- Provide support, advice and guidance to our children and their families;
- Use clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness;
- Use attendance data systematically to evaluate success;
- Encourage, acknowledge and celebrate good attendance;
- Use sanctions sensitively and only when necessary;
- Work in partnership with the Education Welfare Service to improve attendance; and
- Support pupils returning to school after significant periods of absence.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

This attendance policy has its basis in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe it is crucial 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

Schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take an attendance register twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives effective full-time education.

Cardiff Local Authority is required under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

This policy is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. Marlborough Primary School aims to work in partnership with young people, parents and families so that all children can benefit from the educational opportunities provided to them at school.

Key members of staff include:

- Miss Geraldine Foley - Headteacher
- Mrs Rachel Lloyd – Assistant Headteacher (with responsibility for attendance)
- Mrs Leah Crew – Assistant Headteacher (With responsibility for pupil wellbeing.)
- Mrs Sally Hodges – Assistant Headteacher
- Mrs Michelle James - Administrative Team (with responsibility for attendance)
- Mrs Karen Price – Cardiff High Cluster School’s Attendance Officer
- Mrs Eleanor Jones - Education Welfare Officer

This framework operates in conjunction with Cardiff Local Authority’s ‘Five Step System of Attendance Management’.

Procedures

Registration procedures

- The school registers pupils twice a day, in the morning and afternoon as the children enter class at the start of the school day and after lunchbreak.
- To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils are registered using Hosted SIMS which informs the administrative team of pupil absence.
- Teachers, Cover Supervisors and Supply Teachers are permitted to use the following registration codes only: Present (/ or \), absent (O), late (L) and illness (I).
- A registration mark is given for each child in attendance of the session, as well as any absent, late, attending a medical appointment or other authorised or unauthorised circumstances.
- Registration closes at 9:10 am. Any child arriving after this time will be recorded as late unless proof is made that the child has attended a medical appointment.

Class Teacher Procedures

All teachers will:

- Monitor attendance in the class, by reporting or discussing any concerns to the school admin office or Assistant Headteacher.
- Encourage good attendance amongst the pupils.
- Discuss attendance concerns with families or at parent meetings.

If a teacher is absent and a supply teacher is covering the class, Hosted SIMS login details will be provided. If SIMS cannot be accessed, then a paper register may be completed and updated onto SIMS by staff in the admin office.

Procedures for Absence and Lateness

- Parents and carers are asked to inform school by telephone or email at the start of the school day if their child is unable to attend. Office Staff monitor telephone calls and emails each morning to record any notification received and will update SIMS daily with reasons for a child's absence.
- On the second day of absence, if the school has not already been notified, a text message will be sent to the families ask for information regarding their pupil's absence from school.
- In instances of lateness, pupils will be noted in the SIMS online register by staff in the admin office, she will alter the absent (O) mark to the late (L) mark. The degree of lateness may be recorded using the appropriate function within SIMS.
- Admin staff will note any pupils who have requested an authorised or unauthorised absence and will code accordingly.
- A list will be kept of children who are collected early or dropped off late and any concerns will be relayed to the Assistant Headteachers.
- If a child has been deemed vulnerable, a call may be made to the family by the admin team or one of the Assistant Headteachers.

Holidays and Requests for Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance.

We appreciate the difficult year faced by families but given lost learning and the need for stability, we are unable to authorise holiday requests. However, there may be circumstances where it is appropriate to do so. If a holiday or event is requested during term time, this absence will not be authorised. Some requests will be made under exceptional circumstances. The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion, but it is the school's policy that absences will **not** be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances based on the school's assessment of the situation and recommendations made by Cardiff County Local Authority

The below outline the considerations the school will make to ascertain whether the request is because of exceptional circumstances:

- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma, crisis or bereavement involving an immediate relative, i.e., parent, sibling, guardian, carer or grandparent.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member i.e., other relative, is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances are often considered but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for a one-off situation rather than regular or recurring events.

- The needs of families of service personnel will be considered if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.

It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions. It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Marlborough Primary School exercises caution in the authorisation of absence and parents must seek to provide the school with a full picture of the reasons leading to their child's absence. If a child is to attend a medical appointment, parents may be requested to provide evidence by means of an appointment card before the absence is authorised.

Extended Holidays/Heritage Visits

If families take a child on an extended holiday then it will not be authorised. Parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school within 4 weeks of absence or on the agreed date of return. Re-admission cannot be guaranteed.

Current Covid Restrictions and Practise

All holidays taken should comply with current UK restrictions. On return from the holiday some families will be **required to self-isolate if they have travelled from a non-exempt country**. This period of self-isolation will be either authorised or unauthorised, in accordance with the holiday itself. Please see <https://gov.wales/coronavirus-travel> for latest travel guidance.

Promoting Good Attendance

The school promotes high levels of attendance in a variety of ways including contacting parents regarding the importance of good attendance, school prospectus, social media, newsletters and on our school website.

Attendance information is sent to all Reception and Nursery pupils prior to admissions informing them of the importance of good attendance at school.

Good attendance is also recognised by awarding 100% attendance certificates at the end of each term or at the end of the academic year.

Intervention

We recognise the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school sets an annual attendance target and to achieve this, parental support is crucial. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by text message, leaflets, telephone conversations, parents' evenings, and school reports.

Marlborough Primary School operates a 'same day contact' scheme in an attempt to prevent prolonged absence and encourage pupils to return to school promptly.

We discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school.

The Assistant Headteacher and administrative team closely monitor post-registration attendance lists in an attempt to identify instances of ongoing absence.

Where concerns are raised by parents or staff about a pupil's school attendance, a referral will be made to the Attendance Officer who will make a home visit to discuss the matter in an environment, which many families find comforting. During the home visit the Attendance Officer provides information and advice and seeks to support the pupil in returning to school. The Attendance Officer works closely within the Cardiff High cluster group of schools and to ensure that good school attendance is promoted. The Attendance Officer also ensures that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.

Intervention for all children

Marlborough Primary School always seeks to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents.

The below outlines the interventions that the school employs to promote and in turn improve the attendance of all its pupils:

- Send home timely attendance letters to make parents/carers aware of children's attendance (timings may vary and will be dependent on the current Covid situation);
- Request reasons for their child's absence;
- Advise parents/carers that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence;
- Request medical evidence for their child's absence;

School will monitor pupils whose attendance is 80% and below with no signs of improvement (This attendance figure has been lowered during the pandemic and is subject to current circumstances.)

In addition to the above for those children whose attendance is causing a concern and is at 80% or below the following will be put into place:

- Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
- Advise them about their child's lateness and inform the parent/carer that this needs to improve;
- Inform the school's Attendance Officer;
- Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice (currently the LA is not issuing FPN's.)

The role of the EWO - The Education Welfare Officer. The EWS 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 helping parents and teachers to work in partnership in order that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available locally.

Referral to the EWO

When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. A referral might be made when, for example:

- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed;
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established;
- There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance; or
- A pattern of truancy is persisting.

Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) (Not currently being issued by Cardiff LA)

In some circumstances a penalty notices will be issued to supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Section 444, Education Act 1996 or Section 36, the Children's Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school where appropriate.

What is a FPN?

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (absences without a valid reason). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice enables parents/carers discharge what is potentially the liability for a criminal conviction.

Reasons to Issue a FPN

Circumstances when they could be used where there is proven evidence of unauthorised absence due to the following circumstances:

- Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in the current term (these do not need to be consecutive);
- Pupils persistently arriving after the close of the registration period i.e. more than 10 sessions in the current term; (Recommended that registers be kept open for thirty minutes);
- Where parent/carers have failed to engage with the school and/or the EWS in attempts to improve attendance but where court sanctions have not been instigated;
- A period of absence from school due to a holiday that was not authorised by school (taken of term time, 10 sessions or more);
- A pupil has regularly come to the attention of the police during school hours and is absent from school without an acceptable reason.

We never take such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to enforcement action. Attendance is regarded as highly important and we will use our powers if this is found to be the only way of getting a child to attend school.

Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents will receive a written warning outlining the extent of your child's absence and the possibility of you receiving a Penalty Notice. In addition to Fixed Penalty Notice when the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.

FPN Referral

A referral might be made when, for example:

- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve attendance
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established;

- There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance

Procedure of Issuing a FPN

Where a school requests that a Fixed Penalty Notice be issued as a response to a period of unauthorised holiday absence the formal warning letter and 15 day improvement period will not apply.

Costs of the FPN

A FPN is a fine of £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days (but within 42 days of receipt). If the FPN is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days the local authority must either: -

- Prosecute parents/carers in the usual way using section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996) or
- Withdraw the FPN (in limited circumstances as set out in this Code of Conduct).

Only one FPN will be issued to a parent in any one academic year but where there may be more than one poorly attending pupil in a family, FPNs may be issued on more than one child in that family. It will be at the discretion of the EWS whether to issue an FPN on one or both parents/carers.

Whilst there are no restrictions on the number of times a parent may receive a formal warning of an FPN it would not be acceptable to issue "warnings" repeatedly without making further investigations of the wider circumstances.

Please note that once the fine has been paid this money will not go into the school overall budget. It is used to defray the Local Authority's administration & enforcement costs and any surplus must be returned to the Welsh Government. There is no financial incentive to the school for implementing this policy.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Attendance Officer and school staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for each pupil.

The school has a statutory duty to set realistic and challenging targets on attendance. These will be monitored and evaluated by the Governing Body.

Registration data is recorded using SIMS.

The Assistant Headteacher and school's administrative team meet frequently to discuss and review the attendance of all pupils.

The Assistant Headteacher and school administrative team are required by the Headteacher to produce detailed accounts pertaining to the attendance of pupils upon request. This is achieved by publishing reports from SIMS.

The Assistant Headteacher meets regularly with the Head to discuss individual cases of persistent absenteeism or lateness and reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions to date. Decisions are taken at this time as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

Attendance Officer meets with the school regularly and as required to review cases and seek support. The Attendance Officer is responsible for contributing to Marlborough Primary School and the Cardiff High School cluster of schools to drive for school effectiveness through providing advice on proven good practice and promoting the school's Attendance Framework.

Attendance data is reviewed at the end of the academic year by the Assistant Headteacher and is used to populate the Self-Evaluation document and inform the School Improvement Plan.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

All staff will adhere to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, and any specific child protection concerns must be referred to the Designated Child Protection Officer.

The purpose of the above information and procedures outlined is to ensure the co-operative work between pupils, the school, home and external agencies to ensure the best possible attendance of pupils in Marlborough Primary School, thus ensuring that all pupils achieve their highest academic potential.

Further Information and Guidance

Further information can be found regarding attendance in Cardiff schools on:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/all-wales-attendance-framework.pdf>

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Schools-and-learning/Schools/School-Attendance/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.cardiffwestchs.cardiff.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1068&type=pdf>

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/guidance-on-penalty-notice-for-regular-non-attendance-at-school.pdf>

FPN - Code of Conduct

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Schools-and-learning/Schools/School-Attendance/Fixed-penalty-notice-for-non-attendance-at-school/Documents/Revised%20FPN%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20Cardiff%20Final%20Master%20June%202018.pdf>