



Attendance Policy

(Including Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN))

2016

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Introduction and aims

A child's success at school is likely to be affected negatively if their attendance is poor. Those who do not attend regularly may fall behind in their learning leading to feelings of frustration and unhappiness. 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. It is our goal that each of our pupils attends school regularly and on time, making the most of the opportunities available to them.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, every case is different and we will always try to support families to improve the situation. Marlborough Primary School's Attendance Policy (including Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN)) is designed to help teachers, parents and pupils understand their rights, responsibilities and roles when it comes to school attendance. By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves at least 97% attendance.

The school aims to:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure consistency and rigour;
- Provide support, advice and guidance to families;
- Use attendance data systematically to evaluate success;
- Use rewards to 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

The policy has its basis under Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe that all young people have the right to education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.

All schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take attendance registers 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 pupils can benefit from the educational opportunities provided to them at school.

Key members of staff include:

- Miss Geraldine Foley - Headteacher
- Mr. Jonathan Lewis - Deputy Headteacher
- Mrs. Sam Smith - Administrative Team
- Mr. Wayne Eldridge - School's Attendance Officer
- Mr. Martin Ernest - 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. The bell will be rung on the playground at 8:55 a.m. and Reception – Year 6 pupils will line up on the playground and be taken into the building by their teachers and teaching assistants. This will process will be repeated again at 1:00pm. To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils are registered on a paper register which informs the administrative team who inputs details on to SIMS daily.

Pupils are registered immediately when the morning and afternoon sessions begin. Pupils' attendance is therefore recorded twice during the school day.

Teachers, Cover Supervisors and Supply Teachers are each provided with a register and required to record present (/) or absent (O) in red, against each pupil's name. No pupil may be left with a 'missing' mark.

In instances of lateness, parents of the pupil have to fill in the late book in the office and provide reasons for the lateness. Members of staff are required to alter the absent (O) mark to the late (L) mark. The degree of lateness may be recorded using the appropriate function within SIMS. Registration closes at 9:00 am. Any child arriving after this time will be recorded as late and should they arrive after 9:30am this will be recorded as a U, unless proof is made that the child has attended a medical appointment.

Categorisation of absence

Teachers, Cover Supervisors and Supply Teachers are permitted to use the following registration codes only: Present (/), absent (O), late (L) and illness (I).

The school administrative staff may, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government 2010:

B	Educated off-site
D	Dual-registered
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Educational visit
J	Interview
W	Work experience
C	Other authorised circumstance
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
M	Medical appointment
S	Study leave
E	Excluded
R	Religious observance
T	Traveller absence- up to 100 sessions
O	Other unauthorised circumstance
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
U	Late (after registration closed)

Where pupils are not required to attend school the additional codes X, Y, Z and # may be used.

Procedures for absence and lateness

Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone or email on the first day of their child's absence. Office Staff monitor telephone calls and emails each morning to record any notification received.

On the second day of absence, if the school has not already been notified, parents will be telephoned to discuss the absence.

Decision to authorise 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. Marlborough Primary School will only authorise family holidays where parents are able to demonstrate that unique or exceptional circumstances prevent the holiday from being taken outside of term time. In general, holidays during term time will not be authorised.

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. This is fully supported by Cardiff County Council.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. For this very reason schools will rightly prioritise attendance.

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

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.

Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.

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 taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.

The needs of families of service personnel will be taken into account 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 are requested to provide evidence by means of an appointment card before the absence is authorised. If a child is picked up from school for a medical appointment, parents have to confirm in the school's late book that they have taken their child and provide a reason.

Extended Holidays/Heritage Visits

The policy that Cardiff Council used to have on Extended Holidays (or Heritage Visits) has now been withdrawn. Families are requested to make arrangements to take these in the six week break in July and August in order to help schools to support your child in achieving success. If you still take your 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.

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, pupil planners, 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 operate a 'late book' scheme in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school.

The Deputy 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, an Attendance Officer 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.

Good attendance is celebrated at the end of each term as part of the school's 'celebration assembly'. Certificates are given to those students achieving 100% attendance. Weekly attendance is shown on the attendance board and promoted through the school's monthly newsletter.

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 half-termly attendance letters to make parents/carers aware of children's attendance;
- 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;

Intervention for pupils whose attendance is at 93% and below with no signs of improvement

In addition to the above for those children whose attendance is causing a concern and is at 93% 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.

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)

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.

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.

Holiday in Term Time

A Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued if:

- A holiday is taken during term time lasting 10 sessions or more (*note that no warning letter will be received*).

Absenteeism and/or Lateness

The Educational Welfare Service issues parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. A warning letter will first be sent if:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A child has been late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve attendance;
- The police have regularly found a pupil to be absent from school without an acceptable reason.

A Fixed Penalty Notice will then be issued if:

- There is one further unauthorised absence within 15 school days of a warning letter having been issued;

Marlborough Primary School will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

Additional information about FPNs can be found in the Cardiff Council, Code of Conduct, entitled, '*Fixed Penalty Notices for Non Attendance at School,*' which can be found on the council's website - <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk>

Monitoring and evaluation

The Attendance Officer and school staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for each pupil. Registration data is recorded using SIMS. The Deputy Headteacher and school's administrative team meet fortnightly to review the attendance of all pupils.

The Deputy 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 Deputy 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 Deputy Headteacher and is used to populate the Self-Evaluation document and inform the School Improvement Plan.

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.