

# Allensbank Primary School

## Attendance Policy



## **Mission Statement**

Allensbank Primary School is a happy and welcoming school that is committed to providing a friendly, safe and nurturing learning environment for all.

The school fosters respect, celebrates diversity and actively promotes high standards for all.

## **Vision Statement**

At Allensbank Primary School everyone works together to ensure that

- We lay the foundation for a love of learning through being committed to high quality provision which enables the development of skills for the future.
- We have high expectations of ourselves and achieve our full potential through a supportive, nurturing ethos.
- We have a safe, secure environment to learn in and we take pride in the appearance of both the indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- Pupils take responsibility for their own learning, working towards individual targets and celebrating their achievements.
- We show respect and consideration for others within our diverse school community and nurture positive partnerships with parents, carers and the wider community.
- We promote personal growth by actively encouraging relationships based on honesty, trust and respect.
- We have pride and confidence in ourselves as individuals and feel valued within our school.
- We recognise the importance of regular attendance which enables all pupils to achieve high standards.

## **Contents**

- Rationale
- Principles underlying this policy
- School's roles and responsibilities
- Parents'/Carers' responsibilities
- The school's partnership agreement with the Education Welfare Service.
- Registration Procedures
- System for lateness.
- Term-time absences
- How and when problems with attendance are communicated to parents
- Processes used to reintegrate students returning to school after an absence.
- Positive Pro-Active School Procedures
- Dealing with unexplained school absences
- Five Step System
- Monitoring and evaluation

## **Rationale**

When a child attends school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams. The more time a child spends around other children, whether in the classroom or as part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making friends and feeling included, boosting social skills, confidence and self esteem.  
(Strategies for schools to improve attendance and manage lateness -WAG 2011)

Allensbank 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 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 this 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.

## **The principles underlying this policy.**

1. To ensure development of the individual's learning is maintained.
2. To achieve whole school attendance rates of over 94%.
3. To ensure that all absences are authorised.
4. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school.
5. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out tasks.
6. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents, pupils and staff.

### **School's roles and responsibilities**

All staff (teaching and support) at Allensbank 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.

At Allensbank Primary School, the Head teacher and Attendance Leader will monitor, 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.

In addition to monitoring processes the Head teacher and Attendance Leader will regularly analyse data to identify any trends or patterns and to aid reporting to the LEA, Governors and Parents. This data analysis will include:

1. On going tracking of individual, class and year group attendance to provide information for parents, governors and pupils.
2. The calculation of termly percentage rates which will be calculated and reported to the LEA for further analysis and to the Governors and Parents in Governors Reports and as part of the School Improvement Plan. (Appendix 6)
3. The collation of overall rates of attendance for past years which will be reported to the Governors and Parents in Governors Reports and as part of the School Improvement Plan. (Appendix 6)
4. An end of year review analysing the school's effectiveness towards its priority to raise school attendance. This will also be reported to the Governors and Parents in Governors Reports and as part of the School Improvement Plan. (Appendix 6)

The Head teacher and Attendance Leader 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 using data to reinforce this. A report will be prepared for the governing body, termly. This report will include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

## Governing Body

The governors will be assisted in their responsibility to raise pupil attendance and set Welsh Assembly Government Targets for reducing absenteeism through a range of activities.

1. Full analysis of attendance rates and strategies to improve attendance will be included in the School Improvement Plan. (Appendix 6)
2. Benchmarked Analysis of the school's attendance performance to help them set Welsh Assembly Government Targets. (Appendix 6)
3. Regular feedback on the school's progress at raising pupil attendance rates provided in writing in the School Improvement Plan and orally in Governors meetings.

## **Parents'/Carers' 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 Allensbank Primary School.

The School expects parents/carers will:

- 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 will also be expected to:

- Notify Allensbank Primary School on or prior to 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.

### **The school's partnership agreement with the Education Welfare Service.**

The school is very keen to work with all outside agencies and will endeavour to use the skills and services of the Attendance Officer assigned to the school. Regular meetings will be arranged to share information, analyse patterns and identify children with attendance concerns. Local Authority Referral Forms will be used to officially pass our concerns to the SAO/EWO. A system of fast tracking will also be used to inform the SAO/EWO of the attendance of any child identified with specific attendance problems.

The school works in partnership with Cardiff EWS centred around a Five Step Approach to address poor school attendance. The school works at Step 1 and 2 to improve and promote attendance. At Step 3, formal referrals are made to the SAO (School Attendance Officer) If attendance does not improve with this input cases progress to Step 4 which includes EWO (Educational Welfare Officer) involvement and an individual case review which may include issuing formal letters and legal warnings. This case review will also allow EWSO and SEWO (Senior Education Welfare Officer) to consider the appropriateness of moving to Step 5 – Formal Statutory Action.

### **Registration Procedures**

The Headteacher and school attendance leader 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.

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 register. The register will be called promptly in the morning at 8.55 a.m. It will be taken for a second time at the beginning of the afternoon session at 1.15 p.m. with a mark being made in respect of each child. Absence marks will be completed by class teachers providing reasons ( if known) for non attendance. The Local Authority system of register codes will be adhered to.

### **System for lateness.**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late. The registers

will close at 9.30 a.m. each morning. Pupils who arrive late but before the register closes will be counted as present. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will be marked as 'Late after register closed.' The number of minutes a child is late and any reasons given for lateness will be recorded in the SIMS database in order to help identify any trends that may occur. 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 Referral and Integrated Assessment Support Team.

### Lateness

1. Late children will be signed in using the late book by Office Staff upon arrival and receive a late mark in their register.
2. The class teacher will then inform the Headteacher/Attendance leader of any child in their class who is developing a pattern of lateness.
3. If the child arrives at school after the register has closed, i.e. after 9.30am, the child will receive an @ symbol in the register.
4. The Headteacher/Attendance leader will monitor the frequency of any @ marks or patterns of lateness and inform the parents using late letters. (Appendix 6)

### Term-time absences

"Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents."

(Section 199, Education Act 1993).

### Holidays

Allensbank Primary School will consider every application individually; its policy (in line with local authority guidance) is not to grant leave of absence for holidays, other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

The School will consider authorising holidays for:

- Service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking leave during school holiday times.
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments - If the school is satisfied that a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness then the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental

appointments may be given (i.e. the absence may be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parents (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointments card.

Days of Religious Observance - Absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents belong is classified as authorised absence. It would be helpful if the school could be given advance of religious observance days.

### **How and when problems with attendance are communicated to parents.**

Allensbank Primary school is a caring school and always seeks to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit in parents the support deemed necessary to encourage pupils to attend school, sanctions may be used. In the first instance, parents may receive letters which:

- Request reasons for their child's absence;
- Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
- Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
- Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their help in getting their child to school on time;
- Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence;
- Advise them that an Attendance Officer intends to visit their home;
- Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
- Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Educational Welfare Service

### Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

In some circumstances, the school may request that the Educational Welfare Service issue 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 be issued if:

- There is one further unauthorised absence within 15 school days of a warning letter having been issued;
- An unauthorised holiday is taken during term time (*note that no warning letter will be received*).

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.

Allensbank 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.

### **Processes used to reintegrate students returning to school after an absence.**

Where a pupil has been absent for a period of time, the school will make every effort to reintegrate them into school life. Senior school leaders will be available to discuss any individual requirements with Parents/Carers.

### **Positive Pro-Active School Procedures**

Attendance has a very high profile at Allensbank Primary School and is discussed at assemblies, meetings for parents and in governor meetings. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. The school aims to take a pro-active approach to pupil attendance and implements a range of initiatives both child and parent focused to increase attendance patterns.

## Child Focused

To positively reinforce and express value for good attendance, the school:

1. Highlights children with 100% attendance during an end of term assembly and rewards them with a certificate. (See Appendix 1)
2. Presents a weekly 'Attendance Cup' to the class with the best attendance.

Further to this, every child's attendance pattern is analysed at the end of the academic year to identify children with 100%. Each child with a yearly attendance of 100% receives a congratulatory "Certificate of Achievement" and special mention in a whole school assembly.

Where a particular class or year group attendance issue has been identified a more direct approach will be taken. As necessary the Headteacher/ Attendance leader will monitor the attendance of pupils in the specific class and reward children with "100% Attendance" stickers.

## Parent Focused

The school uses a range of techniques aimed at parents to encourage them to raise the attendance of their child.

1. Verbal communication to communicate our concerns of poor attendance to parents.
2. Teachers are encouraged, with the full support of the SLT, to raise any attendance concerns they may have with the child's parents. If the class teacher has specific concerns with parental attitude and co-operation the class teacher will be encouraged to ask the SLT to communicate with the parents directly.
3. Posters and leaflets are distributed to parents as and when specific attendance issues arise. (See Appendix 3)
4. Class assemblies and school concerts are used as opportunities to share concerns and aims for high attendance for all with visiting parents and guardians.
5. Parents are contacted at regular intervals to inform them of their child's attendance patterns and our aims and concerns if applicable.
6. A system of "First Day Response," is used to contact parents and query their child's absence. Teachers are encouraged to ask office staff to contact home with any concerns

## **Dealing with unexplained school absences**

Unfortunately some parents are reluctant or unable to respond to the school's range of positive procedures and are in breach of their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly. As stated, Allensbank Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned or sent a text message 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.

Further to this, the school has designed a system of interventions to tackle poor attendance. (These form Steps 1 and 2 in the Local Authority's '5 Step System):

1. Every child's attendance will be monitored on a regular basis as deemed necessary by the HT/Attendance leader; Weekly, Fortnightly or Monthly.
2. Pupils' attendance patterns will be tracked and monitored using the schools Electronic Register.
3. When a child has been identified with poor attendance its causes will be discussed with the class teacher to determine if there are any mitigating circumstances, e.g. Illness or Religious Observance.
4. If no underlying cause can be found the parents will be contacted by letter to inform them of our concerns, remind them of their obligations and to offer our support in raising their child's attendance. (Appendix 5)
5. If during additional monitoring procedures the child's attendance is still poor or falls further a second letter will be sent which repeats our concerns and their responsibilities but invites them to make an appointment with the school to discuss our concerns further. (Appendix 5) Once again any mitigating circumstances will be discussed with the class teacher prior to the letter being sent home.
6. When the child's attendance is monitored again and a third drop in the percentage rate is seen a final letter is sent to the parents. The final letter states that the case will be brought to the attention of the School Attendance Officer (SAO), attendance patterns in previous years will be investigated and any absences will only be Authorised if accompanied with a medical or appointment card as proof of a valid reason for non-attendance. (Appendix 5)
7. Teachers will be informed of the children who require written proof for their absences, orally by the HT/Attendance leader and in written form through a list of children included in the class registers.
8. The School Attendance Officer (SAO) will be contacted, informed of the school's concerns and asked to make a home visit.
9. The child's attendance will continue to be monitored and will result in Un-Authorised absences being used in future legal action if no improvement is seen.

If at any time the parents engage with the school, and/or attendance rates rise, the process will be put on hold but will resume if further drops are seen.

### **Five Step System**

Following on from School interventions, the '5 Steps System' continues as shown below:

#### **STEP 5: STATUTORY ACTION**

- Implementation of statutory action within the guidelines of the 1996 Education Act

#### **STEP 4: CASE REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT**

- Individual case review
- Case conference
- Pre-Court meetings
- Formal letters
- Consideration of statutory action

#### **STEP 3: EWS REFERRALS**

- Individual pupil referrals based on attendance data and discussions with school attendance leaders
- Formal referral forms completed
- Letters sent to parents and services

#### **STEP 2: EWS ADVICE**

- Where school attendance initiatives are made explicit to all pupils, staff and families
- School attendance policy and the review of attendance data form part of both the SDP and the Governors' meeting agenda

#### **STEP 1: SCHOOL BASED INTERVENTIONS**

- EWS to act in a consultative capacity to assist schools with alternative strategies
- EWS to support the school in looking at agency/service advice and action as appropriate

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy is regularly monitored by SLT and reviewed annually. During this process, the following will be considered:

1. The schools progress in working towards WAG Attendance targets.
2. Success of school initiatives (following data analysis)
3. The outcome of EWS audits of Attendance procedures
4. Changes to Local Authority Guidance or support