



**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**YSGOL TYCROES ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**DESIGNATED STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

NAME: MRS SALLY-ANNE WATTS  
CONTACT: (01269) 593253

**DESIGNATED DEPUTY STAFF MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

NAME: MRS LOUISE REES  
CONTACT: (01269) 593253

**DESIGNATED GOVERNOR WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

NAME: MR RICHIE WALTERS (CHAIR)

THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE (EWS) FOR CARMARTHENSHIR LOCAL AUTHORITY CAN BE CONTACTED ON (01554) 742369 AND THE TEAM INCLUDES REBECCA THOMAS, ANWEN BARKER AND CERI BEVAN.

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### RATIONALE

- Ysgol Tycroes has based its attendance policy on the guidelines as set out by the All Wales Attendance Framework (2011).
- Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents, the school shares with them, and the local authority (LA), responsibility for encouraging good attendance and improving poor attendance.
- The school is required by law to maintain specific records and to produce specified information on the attendance of pupils.
- Statutory obligation apart, the school is committed to improvements in attendance standards as a direct stimulus to raising pupil achievement.
- Poor attendance is destructive of educational achievement, undermines the well-being of each pupil and demoralises staff.
- The LA has a statutory duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education and, if a registered pupil at school, this means attending school regularly and on time.

### AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To promote good attendance as this is vital to educational achievement.
- To convey clearly to parents and pupils that:
  - regular attendance is essential;
  - unauthorised absence and persistent lateness are not acceptable;
  - only the headteacher in the context of the law can approve absence;
  - Parental condoned, unjustifiable absence will be investigated and will be recorded as unauthorised absence.
- To keep records of attendance which:
  - clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence by pupils;
  - provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of school attendance rates through centrally held statistics.
- To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:
  - responding rapidly to pupil absence;
  - recognising pupils who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance records.
- To be sensitive to situations where regular attendance patterns are disrupted by external factors such as family bereavement

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### STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

The legal framework governing attendance is set by the Education Acts and their associated regulations (which relate to schools and Pupil Referral Units).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that "...the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/ her to receive full time education suitable to his/ her age, aptitude and ability and to any special education needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise..."

Section 444 further states "...the parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law..."

Compulsory school age means that children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday and are of compulsory school age until after the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday.

An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was absent with leave (authorised absence);
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil/ parent belongs;
- the school is not within the prescribed walking distance of the child's home and suitable transport arrangements have not been made by the LA. The law relating to walking distance effectively is defined as two miles for pupils under eight and three miles for all other pupils. Distance will be measured by nearest available walking route.

Absence from Ysgol Tycroes will be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- sickness;
- unavoidable medical or dental appointments;
- days of religious observance;
- exceptional family circumstances,

Absence from Ysgol Tycroes will not be authorised for:

- shopping;
- haircuts;

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- missed bus;
- overslept;
- no uniform;
- looking after brothers, sisters or unwell parents;
- minding the house;
- birthdays;
- holidays/day-tripstaken in term time (unless the headteacher considers that circumstances warrant this).

Parents are asked to make all medical and dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.

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. The accuracy of the register is important to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers.

The Welsh Government (WG) Education (Penalty Notice)(Wales) Regulations 2013 states that Local Authorities (LAs) are required by law to adhere to the Education Act 1996 section 444 to include penalty notices as one of the interventions to promote better school attendance.

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 provide that certain cases of unauthorized absence can be dealt with by way of a penalty notice. A penalty notice is a fine of up to £120 and may be issued to a parent/carer as a result of a child's regular non-attendance at school/education provision.

Ysgol Tycroes adheres to the Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices as agreed and adopted by the Local Authority, and therefore may request the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice in certain cases.

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### PRACTICE AND PROCEDURES

Clear systems and procedures will govern response to all pupil absence. Ysgol Tycroes will follow the 'Procedures for Non-Attendance' flowchart as outlined in the All Wales Attendance Framework (2011). This can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

Ysgol Tycroes adheres to the descriptors received from ERW.

95-100% attendance	Best chance of success	Your child is taking full advantage of every learning opportunity.
90-95% attendance	At least 2 weeks of learning missed	Satisfactory. Your child may have to spend time catching up with work.
85-90% attendance	At least 4 weeks of learning missed	Your child may be at risk of underachieving and may need extra support from you to catch up with work.
80-85% attendance	At least 5 ½ weeks of learning missed	Your child's poor attendance has a significant impact on learning.
Below 80% attendance	At least 7½ weeks of learning missed	Your child is missing out on a broad and balanced education. You are at risk of prosecution.

Ysgol Tycroes encourages good attendance and punctuality by;

- creating a caring and nurturing environment whereby pupils' feels safe and appreciated as young adults;
- ensuring that attendance and punctuality are recognised within the whole school reward system, e.g. weekly attendance assembly, reporting of attendance on the weekly newsletter, class and individual rewards weekly/termly;
- developing positive relationships with parents/carers and external agencies working with the family/pupil;

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- monitoring and evaluating the early intervention strategies adopted by the school;
- working closely with multi-agency colleagues and the Education Welfare Service to improve attendance and punctuality;
- monitoring attendance data and trends and reporting this information termly to the Governing Body;
- Completing the 'Later Arrivals' or 'Early Departures' books which are monitored;
- Issuing letters to parents/carers when attendance falls below 90%;
- First day calling to ascertain why an absence has occurred.

### **Specific actions**

- The school will make its policy on attendance clear to parents and pupils prior to admission;
- The school will also communicate the importance of attendance to parents and pupils through assemblies, the school prospectus, newsletters and the school website/Classlist app;
- If no contact is received by the parent/carer of an absent pupil on the first morning of the absence, a telephone call is made by the school's administration staff to investigate the reason for the absence. If the school is not able to contact the family, then this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (N no reason yet provided for absence);
- Details of the absence are recorded, if later received, and discussed with the headteacher and a decision will be made with regards to authorisation as soon as possible. The headteacher may ask the Education Welfare Service for advice with regards to this but the decision to authorise any absence remains with the school.
- If the pupil is registered as a Looked After Child or on the Child Protection register and absent from school without reason, then the school should contact Social Services as soon as possible;
- When a pupil returns to school from an absence, but no explanation is offered, the parent will be contacted;
- A letter will also be sent out if a pupil is persistently late to school;
- Ultimately, if an attendance matter cannot be resolved by the school and the appropriate steps have been followed (as outlined in the 'Procedures for Non - Attendance document'), then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service for further investigation.

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Ysgol Tycroes will also:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures, registration regulations and education law relating to school attendance;
- Complete school registers at the start of the morning session and afternoon session – the register is open for **5 minutes** and closes at **9:05am for the morning session and 1:05pm for the afternoon session**;
- Stress to parents and carers the importance of contacting the school as early as possible on the first day of absence;
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence;
- Consult with all members of the school's community and Education Welfare Service in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy;
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance by the Governing Body;
- Work towards ensuring all pupils are supported and valued and so want to attend school.

### ***The Designated Member of Staff***

Attendance is the responsibility of all staff. There is, however, a designated member of staff for attendance matters and all staff are able to discuss individual pupil attendance with this person. The Designated Member of Staff for Attendance:

- monitors the school's registers;
- liaises with teaching staff;
- meets with the LA Officer on a regular pre-arranged basis;
- refers to other agencies if appropriate;
- refers to the school nurse if there are doubts about the validity of an illness;
- oversees the use of standardised letters to parents addressing specific aspects of attendance and requiring parental response;
- arranges for an attendance meeting in the case of repeated, unexplained absences (school will consider inviting the named governor for attendance to such a meeting);
- ensures that the LA Officer's role is known and understood in school.



## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered, regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn.

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children.

Parents should:

- take an active interest in their child's school life and work;
- attend parents' evenings and other school events, if possible;
- ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time;
- be aware of letters from school which their child brings home;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance;
- always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence;
- avoid booking family holidays during term-time;
- talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend;
- sign their child in and out of school if arriving late or leaving early.

## **REGISTRATION**

### **Keeping the registers**

The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately. The register may be requested in a court of law as evidence in a prosecution for non-attendance. It will also be used for end of term reports, records of achievement and reference requests, and information for other schools, LAs and external agencies.

- No pupil should be marked present unless actually in attendance at school or other agreed educational activity.
- The register should not have missing marks.
- When a pupil arrives late but the register is still open, the pupils should be marked as late but counted as present for the session.
- When a pupil misses registration, she/he should be marked as an unauthorised absence, unless a medical letter/phone call by parent is received and deemed to be genuine.
- Pupils should not have access to the register.
- The headteacher is the only person who can authorise that a pupil be removed from the register – this can only be done with the agreement of the LA.

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### **Lateness**

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parent of a pupil who is persistently late is guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if persistent late arrival is not resolved.

At Ysgol Tycroes, pupils need to be signed into school by an adult on entering the premises.

### **Holidays**

The headteacher has the discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday and will consider every case on an individual basis. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday during term-time. However, there may be circumstances that warrant a pupil taking time off in term time and this is why head teachers are best placed to make the decision. The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 state that head teachers have a discretionary power to authorize leave for a family holiday during term time where parents seek permission. Except for exceptional circumstances, no more than 10 days' leave should be granted for this purpose.

At Ysgol Tycroes, all holiday leave should be applied for by completing the 'Request for Holiday Leave' form and returned to the headteacher for consideration. Except for exceptional circumstances, any child with attendance under 90% will not be granted authorisation for holiday leave.

### **Registration Codes**

Registration codes can be seen in Appendix 1.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed annually (March 2020).

<b>Headteacher:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Chair of Governing Body:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

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### APPENDIX 1

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Off-site education
C	Other Authorised Circumstances
D	Dual-registered (e.g. Present at another school or PRU)
E	Excluded (No alternative provision made)
G	Family Holiday (Not agreed)
H	Family Holiday (Agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (Before the register closed)
M	Medical/Dental Appointment
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised Absence (Not covered by other codes)
P	Approved Sporting Activity
R	Religious Observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller Absence
U	Late (After register closed)
V	Educational Visit or Trip
W	Work Experience
Y	Partial or Enforced Closure
X	Non-compulsory School Age Absence
#	School closed to all pupils

**APPENDIX 2**

**Procedures for Non-Attendance**

