



Achieve Excellence

Exceed Expectations

Ysgol Maes y Felin

Penymaes Road
Holywell
Flintshire
CH8 7EN

01352 711366

Pennaeth/Headteacher
Mr. Peter Davies B.Ed (Hons)

Attendance Policy

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Accessible Formats

This document is available in English and Welsh in Microsoft Word and pdf formats in Arial font size 12 as standard. This document is also available in large print. To request a copy of this document in an accessible format contact Mrs. Debbie Dickinson (01352 711366).



Attendance Policy

Introduction

At Ysgol Maes y Felin we are committed to supporting all of our students to achieve their full potential. Regular attendance is essential for students to gain the greatest benefit from the education provided.

Why is regular attendance important?

Safeguarding

Schools have a duty to promote the safety and well-being of all students; however this becomes difficult when students do not attend school. There is the potential that absent students may be at risk of harm. School, parents, carers and guardians should work in partnership to ensure that absent students are safe. Frequent or unauthorised absences may be considered a safeguarding or welfare concern and will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures:

- *Ysgol Maes y Felin Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy 2019*
- *Ysgol Maes y Felin Attendance Procedure*
- *FCC Education Welfare Service – Procedure for Non-School Attendance 2017*

Learning

Regular attendance is essential to learning because absent students miss important information and learning opportunities. There is also the potential that students who have missed school, and subsequently fallen behind their peers, may become frustrated or disruptive.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers and guardians, students and all members of school staff.

In order to encourage excellent attendance the school will:

- Provide information about attendance expectations in the parent / carer packs.
- Include attendance and punctuality figures in school reports.
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying class achievements.
- Reward excellent or improving attendance through rewards or events

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The law relating to attendance

Both the UK Government and the Welsh Government promote excellent school attendance.

The Education Act 1996 states the following:

Section 7: Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- a) To his [or her] age, ability and aptitude, and*
- b) To any special education needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*

[Education Act 1996, c.56, Part I, Chapter I, Compulsory education, Section 7]

When students are registered with a school, parents, carers and guardians have a duty to ensure that their child attends the school on a regular basis:

Section 444: Offence: failure to secure regular attendance at school of registered pupil.

If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, his [or her] parent is guilty of an offence.

[Education Act 1996, c.56, Part VI, Chapter II, School attendance: offences and education supervision orders, Section 444]

Children whose attendance is low or erratic will also experience difficulties in fulfilling their educational potential; again it is important parents, carers and guardians ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually. If all attempts fail to improve school attendance, legal proceedings may be taken by the Local Authority.'

[Behaviour and Attendance Policy, Flintshire Local Authority Life Long Learning, January 2010]

The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 gives Local Authorities the power to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to the parents, carers or guardians of children and young people who are persistently absent from school without authorisation.

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Circumstances for issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by Flintshire Local Authority, not by the school. The school has a duty to request a Fixed Penalty Notice if a student exceeds 20 sessions of unauthorised absence within a term; however the decision to issue a warning or penalty is at the discretion of the Local Authority.

The Local Code of Conduct: Education Fixed Penalty Notices [Flintshire County Council – September 2014] provides full details on the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices.

Flintshire County Council (FCC) protocols and procedures in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices

Issue of a Penalty Notice:

- *A Fixed Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence;*
- *Use of Fixed Penalty Notice will be restricted to one notice per parent of a pupil per academic year;*
- *In cases where there is more than one poorly-attending pupil in a family, Notices may be issued for more than one child;*
- *There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent may receive a formal warning of a possible Fixed Penalty Notice.*

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate when:

- *At least 20 sessions (10 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence during the current term. These do not need to be consecutive;*
- *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;*
- *Truancy; defined as the action of staying away from school without good reason (Oxford dictionary)*
- *A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in LA care with whom other interventions will be used.*

Understanding types of absence

The school day is made up of two sessions. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not the parents, carers or guardians) as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing or by leaving a message on the school answer phone.

The school will usually authorise absences where a student is:

- Unable to attend school due to a serious illness (an explanation must be provided).

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- Required to attend an emergency medical appointment. *Wherever possible routine dental/medical appointments should be made after school or during school holidays.*
- Absent due to other exceptional circumstances (at the discretion of the Head Teacher).

Circumstances would only be authorised as exceptional (register code C) if the school has reason to believe that the absence is necessary, appropriate and unavoidable.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider necessary, or those for which no explanation has been provided. These types of absence can lead to the Local Authority taking further action, which may include the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or legal proceedings.

Absence Due to Illness

The school will seek to support pupils with medical conditions, in accordance with the Healthcare Needs Policy. It is acknowledged that some medical conditions result in unavoidable absence from school, and when this is the case the school should offer suitable support in order to minimise any detrimental impact on the pupil's learning.

The school will authorise up to 5 days of absence per term due to illness. Any additional days of absence will only be authorised if suitable medical evidence is provided. Acceptable forms of medical evidence include letters or appointment cards from GPs, Consultants or CAMHS. Parents, carers and guardians are not expected to pay for, or provide, a Statement of Fitness for Work ('sick note'). Where suitable medical evidence is not provided the school will not authorise further absences unless there are exceptional circumstances. Pupils with long-term medical conditions, who have a Health Care Plan completed by the School Nurse, are not required to provide medical evidence.

If a pupil is expected to be absent from school for over 20 days due to illness or injury then the school may consider making an application to the Local Authority for Home Tuition, with the consent of the parents, carers or guardians.

Holidays

Absence due to term-time holidays is detrimental to a child's education. Ysgol Maes y Felin expects parents, carers and guardians to support their child's education by avoiding term-time holidays.

There is no entitlement in law to time off school to go on holiday.

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The school reserves the right to refuse to authorise term time holidays. The decision whether or not to authorise a holiday will be made by the Head Teacher on a case-by-case basis and holidays will only be authorised in the most exceptional circumstances. Arranging holidays during term time because of lower costs is unlikely to be a sufficient reason for the leave to be authorised.

Reluctance to attend school

Some students may occasionally be reluctant to attend school, this can occur for a variety of reasons. If this happens it is important that parents, carers and guardians communicate promptly and honestly with the school and that school staff and parents, carers and guardians work in partnership to identify and resolve any issues faced by the student. It becomes very difficult for the school to resolve issues or offer support to students who are absent; parents, carers and guardians should therefore ensure that their children come into school to discuss the situation. If the school has not been given the opportunity to rectify an issue, but the student does not attend school, then the absence may be considered unauthorised.

Regular Absenteeism

A student is considered a regular absentee when attendance falls below 90% for any reason. Absence at this frequency is of significant detriment to children's learning and Ysgol Maes y Felin expect parents', carers' and guardians' full support to improve attendance and limit absences. We monitor all absence thoroughly and regular absentees will be tracked by the pastoral team; where appropriate interventions will be implemented to support students to improve their attendance. When attendance becomes a cause for concern the school will invite parents, carers and guardians to discuss this; it is a cause for concern if parents, carers and guardians fail to engage with this process, such concerns will be shared with the Local Authority.

Returning to School

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, whatever the reason for absence, then it is possible that they will need some support to return to full-time education. The type of support required will vary depending on the needs of the individual, and the circumstances and length of their absence. The school may offer a formal plan to suit the needs of the individual, this may include (but is not limited to) a reduced timetable, small group provision, timetable adjustments, or access to an alternative curriculum. Any such plans should be regularly reviewed and should support pupils to resume full-time, mainstream education as quickly as possible. Plans that make significant changes to timetabling or curriculum require the support of an external agency, either the Education Welfare Service, Behaviour Support Service, or the Educational Psychologist.

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Education Welfare Service

Ysgol Maes y Felin will refer students to the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service if:

- there are concerns about a student whose attendance has fallen below 85%;
- there are concerns about a student who has had 10 consecutive school days of absence;

The Education Welfare Service will support parents, carers and guardians to improve their child's attendance, however where there is unsatisfactory progress, it may be necessary for the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings.

Absence Procedure

All students are expected to attend every school day unless there is an appropriate and unavoidable reason for absence. If a student is not attending school then the parent or carer should contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence to provide an explanation. When students are absent for consecutive days, parents, carers or guardians should phone every day unless a clear and definite date of return can be provided. Explanations for absence must be provided by a parent or carer; it is not sufficient for the student to explain their own absence. If an appropriate explanation for absence is not provided then the school will follow the following procedure:

- Truancy text message
- Register updated according to response to call / letter (or lack thereof)

It is essential that school has accurate contact information for all students

– it is the responsibility of the parent(s) or carer(s) to provide accurate information and ensure that this is updated as necessary.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable; students who arrive in school late are likely to have missed important information and may cause disruption to the rest of the class. All students should arrive in school by **8:45am** to ensure that they are seated in their classroom ready for registration which begins at 8:55am.

Where there are concerns about repeated lateness, the school will contact parents, carers or guardians to discuss this. The school reserves the right to close the registers at 9:30am and code arrivals after this time as 'U' (late after the close of registration); under the guidance of the school's Education Welfare Officer. Where the school and the Education Welfare Officer decide that it is appropriate to use the U code, this will be considered an unauthorised absence.

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Registers

The school has a duty to keep accurate registers. Class teacher will take a register every morning between 08:55 – 09:30am. If your child arrives after 08:55 they must sign the **late to school record**, which will be available in Reception.

Any member of staff responsible for supervising students during the school day must ensure the prompt and accurate completion of the relevant register.
Accurate registers are essential for safeguarding and health & safety.

Equality

Ysgol Maes y Felin is committed to ensuring equality of support and provision for all members of the school community in keeping with the Equality Act 2010. When any member of the school community is subject to unacceptable behaviour because of their protected characteristics¹ the school will uphold the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act (1998) and, where applicable, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Victims of any such unacceptable behaviours will be supported so that they may participate fully in the life of the school.

There is special provision in law for Traveller Families **[Education Act 1996 – Section 444]**. The school acknowledges this provision and will record all relevant absences in the register as code T.

There is special provision in law for absences due to religious observance **[Education Act 1996 – Section 444]**. The school acknowledges this provision and will record all relevant absences in the register as code R.

The school is committed to ensuring that absences directly related to or connected with “Protected Characteristics” will not be used against the family for the purposes of criticism or prosecution.

School Targets

Ysgol Maes y Felin is committed to improving attendance. For the academic year 2019-20 the whole school attendance target is 95%. This target will be reviewed annually. Whole school, class, year group and individual attendance performance will be monitored against this target on a regular basis.

¹ Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

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Staff responsible for attendance matters:

All members of staff are responsible for promoting excellent attendance and discouraging unnecessary absence. Staff supervising students during registration or lesson time are responsible for the prompt and accurate completion of registers.

Members of school staff with specific responsibilities relating to attendance include:

- Mr. Peter Davies – Headteacher
- Mr. David Thomas – Deputy Headteacher
- Mrs. Rhiannon Evans – ANCo and Family Liaison

Local Authority staff members with responsibilities relating to attendance at Ysgol Maes y Felin include:

- Mrs Delyth Taylor – Senior Education Welfare Officer.
- Mr Trevor Jones – Education Welfare Officer.

Summary

- The school has a legal responsibility to maintain accurate records of attendance and share relevant attendance statistics and information with Welsh Government and the Flintshire Local Authority.
- The school has an attendance target and is expected to promote excellent attendance and take action to discourage unnecessary absence.
- Parents, carers and guardians have a duty to ensure that their child/children attend school every day possible and to work with the school to improve attendance if there are concerns.
- The Local Authority has a duty to support the school and parents, carers and guardians to improve attendance.