



## Bishopston Comprehensive School Cluster Attendance Framework

### Policy

#### Rationale

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. As inclusive schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster, we seek to provide environments, in which 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.

*"There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Research shows that missing 17 days of school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a GCSE grade across all subjects. In the workplace unauthorised absences would not be accepted and we need to help our children and young people to prepare for the workplace".*

*ESTYN states:*

*"The statistical link between attendance and attainment is strong. In Wales in 2014, over 92% of pupils with NO absence attained the expected level 4 in English, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 2. For pupils with attendance between 80 – 90%, this figure drops notably to 77% of pupils. Based on the statutory number of 190 school days per year, a pupil with 90% attendance will miss 19 days of schooling each year. Between entering primary school in the reception class to the end of primary education in Year 6, a pupil with an average attendance of 90% will miss 133 full days of school. This is well over half a year of learning." DB*

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. The Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster Attendance Framework 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** over **96%**, whilst our expectation is that our pupils will be in school 100% of the time.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this framework is 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;
- support pupils returning to school after significant periods of absence.

### **Commitments (rights, responsibilities and roles)**

- The Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster Attendance Framework has its basis in 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 within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster 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.
- Swansea 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.
- The Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster Attendance Framework is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

All schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster will 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 within each school **could** include:

- School Attendance /Pastoral Officer/ Learning Managers
- Lead SLT from each of Primary School and Comprehensive School

## Bishopston Comprehensive School Cluster Attendance Framework

### 1. Registration

1. To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils' attendance marks are registered electronically via the Capita School Information Management System (SIMS).
2. Pupils are registered at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.
3. Teachers are required to record present or absent against each pupil's name. Absence marks must be followed up with the appropriate code being added once the reason for absence has been ascertained (see below).
4. The individual schools, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government 2010:

B	Educated off-site	Approved Educational Activity
C	Other authorised circumstance	Authorised Absence
D	Dual-registered	Approved Educational Activity
E	Excluded	Authorised Absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
I	Illness	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity
L	Late (before registers close)	Present
M	Medical appointment	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
O	Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised Absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Authorised Absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence
U	Late after registers close	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational Visit or Trip	Approved Educational Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
Y	Partial or enforced closure	Attendance not required
X	Non compulsory school age abs	Attendance not required
#	School closed to all pupils	Attendance
Z	Pupils not on role	Attendance not required

## 2. Absence and lateness

- 2.1 Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone at the beginning of the first day of their child's absence. Individual schools monitor telephone calls each morning.
- 2.2 Should a pupil be absent from school without explanation, the individual school will follow its own procedures for contacting home (telephone, text, etc) where a request will be sent to parents asking them to make contact with the school both as a safeguarding precaution and also to allow parents to indicate the reason for absence and provide an indication of when their child will be able to return to school. Unless an indication in terms of length of time, is given, parents are expected to inform the school at the beginning of each subsequent day of absence **unless other arrangements have been mutually agreed**.
- 2.3 Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking explanation (See section 4).
- 2.4 Schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster may operate a 'late at the gate' scheme in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school. The school has the right to include lateness within the framework of their Behaviour Management Policy (BMP)
- 2.5 If a child arrives late to school, **pupils / parents** must ensure that they sign in to a 'late book' contained in the reception / **attendance room**, **stating a reason for being late**. If pupils are required to leave school within the day, prior notice must be given to the school (agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher).

## 3. Authorisation of absence (including holidays)

- 3.1 Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster. Schools will exercise 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.
- 3.2 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. Schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster 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. In June 2012, Swansea Local Authority requested that all schools do not authorise holidays in term time, unless in 'exceptional' circumstances. These circumstances can be found in **Appendices 2**. All cases will be looked at individually.
- 3.4 If a parent believes that they have an 'exceptional' reason for requesting authorisation, they are requested to submit a Leave of Absence (LOA) / **'Home School Contract'** form, which will be available on the website or from the main office. An example of this form can be found in **Appendices 2**.

3.5 From January 2015, when assessing requests for leave, the Headteacher will consider:

- The time of year of the proposed trip;
- The length and purpose of the time off;
- The duration of the time off and its impact on continuity of learning;
- The circumstances of the family and wishes of the parents; and
- The overall attendance pattern of the child **within the previous 12 months**.
- ??The school's Attendance target set by ERW?WG?

### **Exceptional Circumstances (Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster Guidance)**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of 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. Schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster 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 Swansea LEA.

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 reason, schools will rightly prioritise attendance.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time, it would not be normal to authorise absence. Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.

The considerations that the school will ascertain whether the request is because of an exceptional circumstance are outlined below:

- Where a parent or child is experiencing a life limiting illness.
- Absences to visit family members are also not usually granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Families may need time to recover from trauma, crisis or bereavement involving an immediate relative, ie: parent, guardian, carer, sibling or grandparent.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member, ie: other relative, is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances, civil or ceremonial activity 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 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 times.
- Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not so reasonably be scheduled at another time.

#### 4. Intervention

- 4.1 Bishopston Comprehensive cluster schools recognise the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by text message, leaflets, parents' evenings, school reports and the school website.
- 4.2 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 **more comfortable**. During the home visit the Attendance Officer provides information and advice and seeks to support the pupil in returning to school.
- 4.3 When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. The **class teacher** is responsible for ensuring that extended support is made available to the pupil, helping them to 'catch up'.
- 4.4 **The EWO, in conjunction with all the schools in the cluster, will ensure that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.**
- 4.5 A range of **initiatives and** rewards are used across the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster.

#### Hierarchy of Sanctions

- 4.6 Schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster always seek to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit from parents the support deemed necessary to ensure pupils 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 of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
  - Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice (see 4.8);
  - Advise them that a referral has been made to the Educational Welfare Service (see 4.12).
- 4.7 (i) In some circumstances, the school may **seek further advice and recommendation from EWS** or request that the EWS issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. **Warning letters are available to be sent by the EWS if:**

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term (1 session = am or pm);
- 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.

4.8 (ii) A Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered if:

- There is one further unauthorised absence within 15 school days of a warning letter having been issued;
- 10 or more unauthorised holiday sessions (5 full days) are taken during term time. This can also be an accumulation of single sessions throughout the term.
- NB: Only one Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued in a year

4.9 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.

4.10 Schools within the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster 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.

## 5. Monitoring and evaluation

- 5.1 The SLT and EWO are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records through SIMS for each pupil.
- 5.2 The EWO meets regularly with each primary school to discuss individual cases of absenteeism, truancy 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. **As a result of the EWO's overview of the whole cluster, the EWO will strive to promote consistency when working with a family that might have children in more than one cluster school.**
- 5.3 The appropriate member of staff in each school will meet with the Educational Welfare Officer as required to review cases and seek support. The Educational Welfare Officer is responsible for contributing to the Bishopston Comprehensive Cluster's drive for school effectiveness through providing advice on proven good practice and promoting the Attendance Framework.
- 5.4 Attendance data is reviewed at the end of the academic year by the Senior Leadership Teams of the Bishopston Comprehensive cluster schools and is used to populate the Self-Evaluation document and inform the School Improvement Plan.

**Appendices 1 – 'Five Step System of Attendance Management'**

**Appendices 2 – Leave of Absence (LOA) form**

**Appendices 3 - Attendance Flow chart**

**Appendices 4 - School attendance letter 1**

**Appendices 5 - School attendance letter 2**

**Appendices 6 - School punctuality letter**

**Appendices 7 - EWO letter 1**

**Appendices 8 - EWO letter 2 (meeting 1)**

**Appendices 9 - EWO letter 3 (meeting 2)**

**Appendices 10 - EWO letter 4 (pre-warning)**

**Appendices 11 - EWO letter 5 (Warning)**

**Appendices 12 - Penalty Request notice**

**Appendices 13 - EWO medical attendance letter**

**Appendices 14 - Parenting agreement contract**



## ***Appendices 1***

### **THE 5 STEP APPROACH TO MANAGING ATTENDANCE**

#### **A Working Partnership**

#### **Casework Management**

In order to achieve our shared goal, of improving attendance and welfare for all children, young people and families a good working relationship between the EWS and the school is vital. The EWS will work with the designated person who is responsible for initiating the 'in school' action, and making referrals in accordance with the 5 Step Approach.

The stages in the procedure are:-

***Step 1 School based intervention***

***Step 2 EWS advice***

***Step 3 EWS referrals***

***Step 4 Case review and assessment***

***Step 5 Formal statutory action***

Each of the steps will be explained in greater detail.

#### **Step 1 School Based Interventions**

This step focuses on school based approaches to supporting and improving attendance for all pupils.

Every school should have policies and procedures in place designed to ensure its pupils attend regularly. There should be a consistent and whole school approach, where all members of the school community are clear about their role. In summary, they should:

- Demonstrate a strong attendance ethos;
- Have a clear policy on absence, stating how it will be managed;

- Apply the policy fairly and consistently to all pupils;
- Shared the policy with all parents/carers at the time of admission to the school and regularly draw it to their attention;
- Have a named member of their management team with lead responsibility for attendance;
- Re-enforce and communicate positive attendance messages throughout the year;
- Have effective systems for monitoring attendance, including first day calling, analysis of data and follow up by form tutors when pupils return from absence;
- Have efficient systems of registration which encourage children and parents to account promptly for any absences, which are in accordance with legal requirements and which show a consistent approach to the classification of absences as either authorised and unauthorised;
- Set and monitor an annual absence target;
- Nominate a school governor with a specific attendance remit;
- Ensure all relevant staff receive training about attendance issues;
- Ensure regular training for staff with registration responsibilities and monitor of practice to ensure high standards by class teachers and others with key responsibilities;
- Promote the importance and legal requirements of good attendance to pupils and parents;
- Intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern
- Reward and celebrate good and improved attendance;
- Make best use of additional support for pupils and parents with the greatest need;
- When absence problems do not respond to interventions from Form Tutor or Head of Year; refer appropriately to the School Attendance Officer.

Research has shown that schools' success in improving attendance depends on continual attention to detail, consistent application of agreed procedures and most of all the provision of a stimulating and appropriate curriculum for the needs of all pupils.

#### **Good practice at Step 1**

- ❖ Regular monitoring of registers.
- ❖ Phoning home on the 1st day of unauthorised absence.
- ❖ Sending a letter home on the 3rd consecutive day of unauthorised absence.
- ❖ Liaison with other school staff.
- ❖ Keeping records of actions/contacts regarding each case

## Step 2 Advice and Consultation

- Parent/guardian(s) should be encouraged to visit school to discuss attendance and strategies for improvement. The parent and pupil should be given achievable target(s) to improve attendance. A date should be set for review.
- If attendance has not improved the Class Teacher, Head of Year or Attendance Officer should prioritise the list of pupils to be referred to the SAO.
- There should be regular formal advice meetings between Education Welfare staff and the **Learning Managers / Headteacher** to identify pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties. This should include regular examination of attendance registers. The frequency of which will vary according to mutually agreed need. These should take place in both Secondary and Primary schools as appropriate. The Senior Lead for Attendance should attend these meetings at agreed intervals.
- The SAO and EWO will discuss and agree actions which needs to be taken; when and by whom.
- Commitment required from all parties to undertake agreed actions by the next scheduled meeting.
- Discussions, advice and actions to be recorded, with a copy kept by both the EWS and school at the end of each consultation and other appropriate feedback as agreed with school staff.
- EWS will provide advice and support to the school on issues relating to attendance, access to education, welfare and safeguarding, exclusion or related matters in order that future action can be agreed.
- SAO's to keep accurate & up-to-date electronic casework records of any contact and communication with parents/guardians/pupils/other agencies.
- The EWS will feedback information in relation to work which has been undertaken on cases open to EWS .
- An early referral and subsequent involvement of both SAO/EWO may help to prevent a child going missing, or prevent truancy and other social problems from becoming entrenched. Delay in making an appropriate referral is often detrimental to the interests of the child involved and once truancy becomes entrenched it can be very difficult to bring about a return to regular school attendance

### Good Practice

**Schools may wish to consider using a formal 'Attendance Contract' which outlines expectations, actions and responsibilities for the pupil and their parent(s) for improved attendance, which they must agree and sign together with the school, School Attendance Officer or EWO.**

## Good Practice

### PROPOSED AGENDA FOR MEETING WITH LINK EWO

It is best practice to plan for regular meetings with the School's link EWO.

The EWS suggest the Schools School Attendance Officer and the lead person with responsibility for attendance is a part of these meetings.

Suggested structure of these meetings:

- **General Preventative** – to discuss, agree and review procedures and short-term strategies or projects to improve general punctuality and attendance in the year group/whole school.
- **Early Intervention** – to identify, discuss and review individual pupils with emerging punctuality or attendance problems. Decide what school-based or other actions could be used to address concerns.
- **New Referrals to EWS for support** – to identify, discuss and make formal referrals to the EWS of those pupils where EWS intervention is needed over and above school's actions to address attendance concerns.
- **Reviewing Cases** – EWO and school to provide feedback and share information about progress with existing referred cases.

Schools should provide overall attendance data for the year group and class/form groups and individual pupil attendance printouts to be able to target work.

The EWO will take notes from this meeting and share agreed actions with the School.

### **Mandatory Practice**

If there are concerns that the pupil's family have moved out of the area, without leaving a forwarding address/name of new school, the School Attendance Officer must complete and forward the Children Missing Education (CME) Checklist for Schools to

### **Good Practice**

Before accepting a referral from a School Attendance Officer, the EWS will expect the school to have first undertaken a number of steps to address the pupil's non-attendance. these would include:

- action by the class teacher/form teacher;
- action by the Head of year (secondary) or Head or Deputy Head (primary)
- contact with parents; including the school sending a sequence of letters of concern to the parents before formally involving the SAO;
- Inviting parents to a meeting in school;
- Offering help and support in the first instance;
- Challenging the outcome if not satisfactory – i.e. if absences for illness continue to be covered by notes – advise parents that medical confirmation is required.
- Undertaking a minimum of 1 home visit and speaking to the parents about making improvements/addressing attendance difficulties.

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- Keeping accurate casework records detailing all EWS involvement and interventions.
- Sending a “Final Warning” letter where a child’s attendance fails to improve advising the parent/carer that legal action may be started.
- If no improvement in attendance within a given timescale is achieved the EWO and enhanced EWO (Legal) will meet to undertake a case review to consider the appropriateness of moving to Step 5 – Formal Statutory Action. They will then instigate a Pre-Court meeting.
- ***Instigating a Pre-Court Meeting***
- If the child’s attendance fails to improve, parent/carers and their child will be invited to a Pre-Court Meeting to which a school representative and any others involved with the family or child may also be invited. Parents/carers may have a legal representative at this meeting.
- If a parent/carer fails to attend this meeting without an acceptable reason or behaves unreasonably or aggressively and does not co-operate, court paperwork will automatically be issued and the parent/carer’s non attendance at the meeting used as evidence of a lack of engagement

## **Step 5 Statutory Action**

The Education Welfare Service will:

- Consider suitability of Court proceedings based on a portfolio of evidence provided by the school, SAO's and EWO's.
- Decide on the most appropriate proceedings to instigate and inform the school and the parents.
- Prepare documentation for the legal proceedings based on the portfolio of evidence provided by the school.
- Seek legal advice as appropriate.
- EWS will attend court and present evidence as required.

