



**June 26<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**RE: Important information regarding school attendance**

Dear parent/carer,

As you probably know, attendance in schools in Wales has not fully recovered to Pre-Covid levels. The average student in Wales is attending below 90%, which is having a significant effect on pupil outcomes and chances. 90% equates to 4 weeks off per year, which amounts to a staggering half a year missed in 5 years! If high school is preparation for adult life, it must be recognised that no adult can maintain a job taking off 20 absence days and more per year.

The Welsh government is keen to enforce a 90% minimum threshold for all pupils in Wales. Any pupil below 90% attendance is classed as a persistent absentee, and without clear medical need to miss school will now be at risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Failure to comply with school attendance law will now risk parents receiving £60 fines, rising to £120. Failure to pay such a fine can lead to a £1000 fine and a criminal record. If you have more than one child with low attendance, each case is dealt with separately so fines will be for individual children; fines could double or triple.

Obviously as a school we do not wish any parent to face such penalties and we will work extremely closely with parents of children with low attendance, to help them improve their approach to school and increase attendance. Some of you might have already been sent letters of concern about their child's attendance. Many have reacted in a positive way and attendance has improved, but for others low attendance remains a huge problem.

In light of this, it is important that you understand the school's approach in September, so you are clear of the school's expectation and the system it will follow to respond to poor attendance.

After the first 3 weeks, attendance will be checked. Every pupil below 90% will be sent a letter of concern and be placed on a three-week monitoring period. If a pupil fails this monitoring period (93% minimum, 1 day in 15 days) then they will be invited into school to meet with the Head of Year to discuss the matter in more detail. This monitoring will be continued until the pupil achieves over 90% attendance. Failure to meet with the school or continued poor attendance will mean the involvement of the local authorities' Enforcement Officers. These are a 15 strong team with a remit to improve attendance by interacting directly with parents. They will respond by visiting all houses of pupils with attendance which has not improved. Further absence at this point will mean a direct referral to the local authority, who will enforce an FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice). This would include a further monitoring period, which has to be met with a 100% attendance rate or be issued with a fine.

As you can see the approach is firm, but fair. I will stress that holidays taken in term time are seen as unauthorised absence and will count against your child in terms of their attendance record. Holidays in term time should not happen and will not be a defence to poor attendance. Poor attenders will also not be allowed on school trips. If your child is booked on to such a trip (skiing etc)



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you will be informed of the risk of your child not being allowed to go well before the departure. Refunds will not be possible.

Of course, pupils do get ill and on some rare occasions this can mean some time out of school. If your child is ill for any reason, it is essential that the school is contacted directly to inform us of the absence. If your child is already below 90%, we will expect some medical evidence, otherwise we will not authorise the absence. Consistent failure to inform the school of absence will mean a direct referral to the Enforcement Officers. Your child has a 6-day buffer of illness, which would mean they could still reach the school's target of 97% for a school year. This should cover the many minor ailments suffered by children in a school year and not adversely affect school outcomes.

Please remember that if pupils have dentist or doctor's appointments, this should be organised at a convenient time. If school time is missed, this should be kept to a minimum with pupils coming to school before or after set appointments. Full days off for an appointment is not acceptable, unless there are circumstances that have been discussed in full with the school.

If your child has a physical ailment, (broken bone etc) in most cases time off school should be kept to a minimum. Plans can be put in place to allow your child to access school using the lift or to be based in downstairs classrooms. A few pupils this year have successfully accessed school even though they had physical problems that restricted their movements.

I will stress that all these measures are for the benefit of your child. Sometimes dealing with teenagers, their worries and concerns, can be a challenge as a parent. It is important that we accept this and work directly with the school to formulate a plan of support that gets reluctant attenders back into school. You as the parent/carer are responsible for this, as engagement with school is key to avoiding intervention from the local authority. However, we will not hesitate to use the local authority systems when it is felt that attendance has remained consistently below the 90% threshold.

Please feel free to share this information with your children. Attending school is the law and must be treated as such. But please remember, attending school is the gateway to opportunities and the chance to develop key skills that will help support the next stage of their young lives. Every day missed, is a day lost, and lost time is never found.

If you have any queries or concerns do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours faithfully

Innes Robinson

Headteacher