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Education Attendance Policy (Wales)

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Education Attendance Policy – Welsh Schools

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School attendance approach at SENAD’s schools

The Welsh Government requires that schools should continue to clearly and consistently communicate the expectations around school attendance to families and any other professionals who work with the family. Any discussions should have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the child or young person and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer or young person. This conversation is particularly important for children with a social worker.

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all children and young people can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school and in turn, this leads to poor outcomes as adults. In addition, research shows that these children are vulnerable and at increased risk of exploitation.

This adverse impact on learning is more profound for children with an additional learning need who may face periods of exclusion from learning, due to not having the right setting for them, or periods of not engaging due to anxiety and their underlying mental health and disability.

There is a strong correlation between attendance and progression for pupils. Periods of absence disrupt the rhythm of learning and prolonged patterns of absence or lateness for lessons can result in significant under achievement and diminished life chances in adulthood. Absence from education can also signify safeguarding issues around the absent pupil’s welfare and safety. To improve the life chances of young people in our schools, SENAD will:

- Promote good attendance and work to reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Act early to address children absent from education and missing education.

The Welsh Assembly Guidance is: [guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#). Reference should also be made to the All Wales Attendance Framework; [all-wales-attendance-framework.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Accordingly, SENAD and its schools expects:

- Parents/guardians (or Registered Managers in their absence) to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at the school attend regularly;
- Attendance targets will typically be set at 95% (for compulsory phases) unless there is a structured attendance plan to the contrary; and
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

What does the law say and what do parents have to do?

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect those laws and the guidance produced by the Departments for Education in England and the Welsh Government. The legislation is set out in the following regulations as follows:

In Wales, for Aran Hall, this is set out in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013

For Aran Hall School, this policy also meets the expectations of Working together to safeguard people guidance [Safeguarding guidance | GOV.WALES](#) and the following legislation [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Each school within the SENAD Group of Schools has developed its own approach to managing attendance but this policy provides the framework for their approaches.

Floor targets – and action plans

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. All schools will work consistently towards a goal of seeking **100% attendance for all children**. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

It is likely that in schools with relatively small numbers of pupils those targets will be differentiated to meet the ongoing needs of individual pupils. This may be the most valid response where the outcomes for a single pupil can skew whole school outcomes. The school will, however, also look at whole school issues within that context. The school will review attendance against the benchmarks as follows:

- **95% expectation** (bench mark – secondary)
- **90% floor** (the persistent level of absenteeism which requires intervention)
- **Sub 90%** requiring a specific attendance management plan

When attendance is recorded

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion they must record whether every Pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances; or,

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic or paper-based register

Safeguarding: Children Absent from Education

There is statutory duty on all Local Authorities to have systems and procedures in place to monitor Children Absent from Education and Children Missing Education. The school's child protection and safeguarding policy (on the school's website) is linked to this attendance policy.

- Children absent from education, particularly persistently, can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It is important that the school response to children absent from education supports identifying such abuse and also helps prevent the risk of them being absent in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging and also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as with a child in need or on a child protection plan, or as a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Further information and support, includes:

- schools' duties regarding children missing education, including information schools **must** provide to the local authority when removing a child from the school roll at standard and non-standard transition points can be found in the Department's statutory guidance: [Children Missing Education](#).
- further information for colleges providing education for a child of compulsory school age can be found in: [Full-time-Enrolment of 14 to 16 year olds in Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges](#).
- general information and advice for schools and colleges can be found in the Government's [Missing Children and Adults Strategy](#).

Examples of those most at risk are:

- Young offenders
- Those with homeless parents or parents living in refuges
- Young people in public care
- Young people who are privately fostered
- Those who have been permanently excluded
- Those at risk of radicalisation (**see policy 507**)

Each local authority has a named contact for children absent from education.

We are aware of our responsibility to contact the named person in relation to any child / young person who fall into this category for whatever reason.

The golden rule in safeguarding needs to be followed:

“if in doubt tell someone”

Attendance register codes

To aid analysis for our placing Authorities, Aran Hall School will use the Welsh attendance codes as follows:

Official Registers Codes...	
Register Attendance Marks	
/\	Present at registration am & pm
L	Late but arrived before register closed ¹
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)
D	Dual Registered (present at another school/college)
J	Interview
P	Approved supervised sporting activity
V	Education visit or trip
W	Work experience (not work based training)
Authorised Absence Marks	
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code)
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
F	Agreed extended family holiday
H	Agreed family holiday
I	Illness
M	Medical or dental appointments ²
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller absence
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils
Y	Partial or forced closure – snow/Health & Safety/failure of day-pupil taxi
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
Unauthorised Absence Marks	
G	Family Holiday (not agreed or in excess of agreement)
O	Other Unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes)
U	Late and arrived into school after registration has closed
N	Reason for absence not yet provided (see below)
#	School closed to all pupils

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided is typically NOT used. Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation)

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in the guidance document [guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

- **Code I** is used where the pupil is ill with COVID-19.
- A parent or child refusing to attend due to anxiety is an unauthorised absence and **code O** is use.

¹ Session will *typically* close 45 minutes after registration has started for the session

² The expectation is that they should be booked **outside** of school day where possible

Code S: Study leave for Year 11s

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils to be in school if they so choose.

Part-Time timetables for pupils of a compulsory age (5-16)

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs, for example:

- where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.
- Sensory dysregulation is resulting in non-engagement and potentially dangerous behaviour

A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.

This approach must be shared with the placing Authority SEN officer and social worker, as well as parents.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence under code C or code I (illness).

School days and academic holiday periods

Each SENAD school will set its own academic term dates. We teach 190 days a year which is 380 sessions. Leaders at Aran Hall School will determine its school day/week to best meet the needs of the school community.

Typically, the Principal will plan to align holiday periods with those of neighbouring Local Authorities as far as possible.

Holidays in term time

At Aran Hall School, the Principal can only agree to absence for a family holiday if they believe there are special circumstances which warrant it. They can only agree to absence of more than 10 school days in a school year if they believe there are *exceptional* circumstances.

Parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time and parents must apply for the leave in advance of taking it. Each request for holiday absence should be considered individually, taking account of: the age of the child; the time of year proposed for the trip; its nature and parental wishes; the overall attendance pattern of the pupil; the child's stage of education and progress; and whether circumstances warrant it. Schools should invite parents to discuss any proposed holiday in term time.

If a school agrees absence and the pupil goes on holiday for 10 days or less, absence is authorised (use Code H).

If the parents do not apply for the leave of absence in advance of taking it the pupil must be recorded as unauthorised absence using Code G, as schools cannot approve family holidays retrospectively.

If a school does not agree absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised (Code G).

If parents keep a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised (Code G). If the school considers that there are exceptional circumstances why the pupil should be granted approval for a holiday of more than 10 days, this approval can be given and the absence would be authorised and recorded under Code F.

Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

Preservation of the Attendance Register

Every entry in the admission register and attendance register must be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register may be held in electronic form as **long as it is backed up**.