

Ysgol Sant Dunawd Attendance Policy



Introduction

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability or additional learning needs. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to make the most of educational opportunities available to them. Ysgol Sant Dunawd takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of its pupils. We acknowledge that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment, and impedes children's ability to develop friendship groups within the school.

As a school we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%;
- Maintain levels of attendance by promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued;
- Raise awareness of the importance of good attendance;
- Ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance;
- Regular attendees make better progress, both socially and academically;
- Regular attendees find school routines and school work easier to cope with;
- Regular attendees find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attendees have an easier transfer to secondary school.

We expect Parents/Carers to:

- Phone school on each morning of absence (ideally before 9am) with the reason;
- Keep school updated by telephone, email or letter when a child has an extended period of absence;
- Arrange dental and medical appointments out of school hours where possible or during holidays. Pupils who miss registration for appointments will be classed as absent, according to the Welsh Government absent codes;
- Ensure your child arrives in school on time, properly dressed, with the correct equipment and ready to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness to be recorded by a staff member;
- Try to minimise time out of school by timing holidays to occur during school breaks;
- Avoid taking holidays in September as it is unsettling both socially and academically for a child to miss the start of a school year;
- Remember that the more time your child is missing from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost – a thorough understanding of the work can only take place when the child is in the classroom;
- Work closely with the school and the Educational Social Worker (ESW) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.

Regular and punctual attendance of pupils at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. In law, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure their child's attendance at school and that absence is not authorised by the school.

Attendance Percentages

Attendance percentages can be misleading. The following table indicates how many weeks and days of learning can be missed over an academic year for specific attendance percentages:

Attendance rate	Total Days Absent	Equivalent to
95%	9	1 week and 4 days of learning missed
90%	19	3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed
85%	28	5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed
80%	38	7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed
75%	46	9 weeks and 1 day of learning missed

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 over half a year of learning.

As a school we will:

- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters if necessary as soon as possible;
- Remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in the Home School Agreement and correspondence;
- Publish our attendance rate in the Governing Body's Annual Report to Parents;
- Acknowledge and reward excellent attendance;
- Publish a child's attendance rate on their Annual Report;
- Let parents/carers know if we are concerned with a child's attendance or punctuality;
- Make a referral to the ESW if concerns persist.

The Local Authority has a responsibility:

- To provide and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children;
- Support the school and parents/carers to fulfil their legal duty through the Education Social Work Service.

The Local Authority has had powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) of £60 for unauthorised absences from school since September 2014. These FPNs can be issued to address any unauthorised absences from school in excess of five school days in one term or excessive authorised absences from school following monitoring.

The ESW Service is the Local Authority's enforcement agency and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may also take parents/carers to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. The court may fine the parent/carer and put in place a School Attendance Order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

Authorised Absences

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. For example:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending school by an unavoidable cause;
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observances in their particular faith.

We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know as soon as possible and we will try to deal with the situation sympathetically.

Authorising Holidays

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday during term time. In relation to granting a leave of absence from school, The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 make it clear that the responsibility lies with the Headteacher. They state that:

- On application made by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, the school may grant a leave of absence to enable the pupil to go away on holiday.
- Save in exceptional circumstances, a pupil must not be granted more than ten school days leave of absence in any school year.

At Ysgol Sant Dunawd, a holiday of up to ten days will only be authorised when a pupil has at least 95% attendance in the current and previous academic years at the time of absence. Therefore if a holiday is authorised in advance but a child then drops below a 95% attendance rate, the school will record the holiday as an unauthorised absence. This will be made clear in a holiday request response. Even then, you can see from the table on the previous page that a 95% attendance rate plus ten days holiday will result in an overall 90% attendance rate, without taking days absent due to illness into consideration.

Unauthorised Absences

There are times when children are absent from school for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as 'unauthorised absences'. Examples include:

- Going shopping;
- Going for a family day out;
- Child's birthday;
- Sleeping in after a late night;
- Inadequate uniform;
- Confusion over school dates;
- Unapproved holidays;
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or the reason is considered unsatisfactory;

Unauthorised absences have to be reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact you to consider taking legal action against you if your child has unauthorised absences.

Punctuality

- The bell sounds just after 8:50am with the official school day and registration starting at 8:55am. Afternoon registration begins at 12:50pm. Your child should be in school by these times.
- It is very important to be on time as the first few minutes of the day are often used to give out instructions and is swiftly followed by a daily whole-school group and guided phonics/reading session.
- If your child misses registration, their whole day might be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and can often be embarrassing for your child despite our attempts to welcome at all times. We take the view that there are no late children; only late parents.
- We will let you know if we have any concerns about your child's punctuality.

Recording Attendance and Punctuality

Class Teachers take the register from 8:55am and 12:50pm. Reasons for absence by letter will be kept on file and if offered verbally by parents (in person or by phone) they will be recorded by staff according to the Welsh Government attendance codes. Arrival times for latecomers are recorded on the register.

Attendance Codes

Code	Description	Code	Description
/	Present (AM)	N	No reason provided for absence yet
\	Present (PM)	O	Unauthorised absence
B	Educated off site (not Dual Reg)	P	Approved sporting activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances	R	Religious observance
D	Dual registration	S	Study leave
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	T	Traveller absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	U	Late (after registers close)
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)	V	Educational visit or trip
H	Family holiday	W	Work experience
I	Illness	X	Non-compulsory school age absence
J	Interview	Y	Partial or Enforced closure
L	Late (before registers close)	Z	Pupils not on roll yet
M	Medical/Dental appointments	#	School closed to all pupils

Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality

The Headteacher monitors attendance and punctuality rates and has a meeting with the school's ESW at least once per half term to share the data and reasons for absences/lateness.

If any child's attendance falls below 90% or is persistently late, the school will send a letter to raise concerns. If there is no improvement in attendance or punctuality over a four week period then parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to discuss the absences/lateness.

If there is still no improvement following the meeting or the parents/carers fail to meet the Headteacher, the issue will be passed on to the school's ESW.

Rewarding Excellent Attendance

Excellent attendance at Ysgol Sant Dunawd is rewarded in the following ways:

- 100% attendance stickers awarded each month.
- Awesome Attendees display updated each month in the school hall recognising the class with the best attendance rate.
- Bronze certificates awarded for 100% attendance in a given term, silver certificates for two consecutive terms (Autumn and Spring) and gold certificates for 100% attendance in an academic year.
- Certificate of Attendance awarded at the end of an academic year for all those children who achieved at least the school's average attendance rate for the year.

When a child attends school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. The more time a child spends around other children, whether in the classroom or as part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making friends and feeling included, boosting social skills, confidence and self-esteem. Attendance at Ysgol Sant Dunawd will remain a priority to ensure that our children are given the chance to achieve their potential.