



Pencoed Cluster Attendance Newsletter – January 2025

The Pencoed Cluster of Schools are committed to ensuring regular attendance at school is a priority, providing pupils with the best possible chances in life to succeed and achieve their goals.

Absences due to illness are unavoidable in most cases. Sometimes, a child is ill in school, and we have to ask you to pick them up early. And, of course, the '48-hour rule' applies when pupils are physically sick or have an upset tummy.

But there's no escaping from the fact that good attendance and punctuality are vital to good progress. Therefore, each school will work with parents/carers, pupils and the local authority to ensure that all pupils receive appropriate education and attend school regularly.

DID YOU KNOW?

School days per year = 190 days
Holidays and weekends = 175 days

90% attendance during 1 school year = 1/2 day missed each week.

90% attendance during school year = 4 weeks of missed lessons.

90% attendance over 5 years of school = 1/2 school year missed.

90% might sound good but it is half a day a week of missed school. This is equal to a year of missed education by the age of 16.

80% attendance is the equivalent to missing on average 1 day a week. This equates to 2 years of missed school by the time your child is in Year 11.

Before the half-term holiday, the Welsh Government issued additional guidance, which identified, 'good attendance depends on circumstances, but is usually taken to be around 95%'. In addition, a child will be identified as persistently absent from school if their attendance falls to 90%, which would raise concerns and require support to improve.

Proactive Strategies

Each cluster school will praise children in different ways to promote and encourage good attendance at school. This could be a school mascot, poster campaign, announcements, celebration assemblies and incentives.

Attend to Achieve Letter

On the following weeks each school will be sending out Attend to Achieve letters to inform parents/carers of their child(ren)'s attendance across that period. These are for your information.

Week commencing 6th January 2025

Week commencing 28th April 2025

Possible Learning Missed – Autumn Term	
Total possible days in school 75 days / 150 sessions (this does not include inset days)	
Purple	100% Not Missing any lessons. Your child has the optimum chance to achieve well and is taking full advantage of every learning opportunity.
Green	95% 96% 97% Missing 2 days / 4 sessions of school
Amber	91% 95% 93% Missing approximately 5 days / 10 sessions of school
Red	92% and below Missing 6 days / 12 sessions or more



Letters

Should your child(ren)'s attendance and punctuality fall below a certain threshold, e.g. 92% in autumn 1, 93% in autumn 2 and 95% after the Christmas period, the school will issue a 'Letter 1' informing parents/carers that their child(ren)'s attendance needs to improve.

In addition, should the school continue to have concerns about your child(ren)'s attendance, i.e. it does not improve, a 'Letter 2' will be sent home asking you to attend a meeting with the school's Family Engagement Officer (FEO). The purpose of the meeting is to explore ways in which the school could support, or actions parents/carers could take to improve their child(ren)'s attendance. Where parents/carers are unwilling to engage in these supportive meetings, an automatic referral to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will take place and the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will engage with the family.

Punctuality

Having good attendance also means being on time and not being late to school. Children who arrive late can feel embarrassed, left out and miss out on important introductions to lessons. Punctuality is an essential life skill that needs to be taught from the very beginning. Therefore, it is important that your child arrives at school and ready to walk into the school building at 8.35am for registration at 8.40am. Please be aware if they arrive more than 30 minutes late they will be marked as absent for the half day. **Furthermore, if your child has five or more late marks, the school will issue a letter 1 informing you that they have met this threshold.** Should they continue to be late, you will be invited to school to meet with a staff member to look at ways that we can collaborate to improve your child's punctuality.

If you need to make a medical or dentist appointment:

Medical appointments should, where possible, be made outside school hours. When this is unavoidable, your child should be in school for the remainder of the school day, whether before or/and after the appointment. If your child's appointment is at 09:45 please bring them to school first and then return them before lunch. Again, in the afternoon, if they have an appointment at 13:45, please pick them up from school after the registration period. Attending a medical appointment is counted as an absence from school if your child is not physically present when the register is taken.

Holidays in Term Time

'Schools can only agree to absence for a family holiday or trip if they believe there are special circumstances that warrant it.'

(WG guidance, 2023)

'Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that schools will agree to family holidays during term time.'

(All Wales Attendance Framework, 2011)

We have a holiday request form, which will need to be completed before any child goes on a holiday during school term time. This can be accessed through the school office or on our website. It is highly likely that should your child have an attendance below 95%, i.e. they took at least two weeks off school and/or went on holiday in the previous 12 months, the request will be unauthorised. Due to the importance of GCSEs and the impact any absence can have on a child's GCSE results, holiday requests for children in year 10 and 11 will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.



This does not mean you cannot go on your holiday. However, it will be unauthorised (G code) on the attendance system. Whether authorised or not, the holiday absence will negatively impact your child's attendance.

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) has updated its Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) guidance. As a cluster of schools, we have agreed that these will be issued where necessary in line with this guidance.

If you choose to take your child(ren) out of school for a term time holiday and your child(ren)'s attendance is below 90% (more than four weeks of schooling missed in the previous 12 months), the school will likely request an FPN.

As per the previous cluster newsletter, FPNs for unauthorised holidays will be issued from January 2025 should the need arise.

Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

An FPN will only be considered where there is proven evidence of unauthorised absence due to the following circumstances:

- Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in the current term (these do not need to be consecutive);
- Pupils persistently arriving after the close of the registration period i.e. more than 10 sessions in the current term;
- Where parent/carers have failed to engage with the school and/or the EWS in attempts to improve attendance but where court sanctions have not been instigated;
- A period of absence from school due to a holiday that was not authorised by school;
- A pupil has regularly come to the attention of the police during school hours and is absent from school without an acceptable reason.

We never take such action lightly and would far rather work with parents/carers to improve attendance without having to resort to enforcement action. Attendance is a high priority for all schools in Wales.

What if my child(ren) needs to miss school?

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure your child(ren) get a full time-education. There are only a small number of circumstances where missing a school day is permitted. Therefore, your child(ren) must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child(ren) is too ill to attend.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child(ren) to be absent on a specific day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child(ren) cannot go to school on a specific day because they are observing a religious event and you have informed the school.



- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child(ren)'s transport to school and it's not available or has not been provided yet.

Support

If you require support with your child(ren)'s attendance, you can contact the school's Family Engagement Officer (FEO) or Bridgend County Borough Council's Early Help Service:

Website Information:

<https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/residents/children-and-young-people/bridgend-early-help-services/>

Email contact: earlyyearsandyoungpeople@bridgend.gov.uk

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