

VALE of GLAMORGAN

Ysgol y Ddraig Attendance Policy

2023 - 24

May 2024



INTRODUCTION:

Ysgol y Ddraig is committed to creating an environment in which all children and young people are welcomed, supported, and can flourish as members of a happy, caring, and safe school. It is our goal that all our learners attend school regularly and on time, making the most of the opportunities available to them. Excellent attendance and punctuality are essential in ensuring learners make sustained academic progress and access all the wider opportunities that **Ysgol y Ddraig** offers.

We work in partnership with learners and their parents or carers around the importance of regular and punctual attendance and have developed partnership working with other agencies to support those learners who are struggling to attend regularly and consistently. Through partnership working, it is our ambition that every learner achieves over 95% attendance.

The **Ysgol y Ddraig** Attendance Policy is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. This framework operates in conjunction with the Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority's Attendance Policy (Sept 2023)

This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

The law states that:

- Parents and guardians are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child receives effective full-time education between the ages of five and sixteen.
- The 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 school is 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.

This policy is designed to help school staff, parents and learners understand their rights, responsibilities, and roles when it comes to school attendance.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Make attendance and punctuality a high priority.
- Outline our systems for monitoring and improving attendance, and for ensuring safeguarding is central.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure consistency and rigour.

Attendance and School Culture & Ethos

To promote and sustain high levels of attendance **Ysgol y Ddraig** is working towards creating an ethos and culture where: -

- School is a safe place for all.
- School is an interesting and engaging place for all learners.
- School is a welcoming, happy, and kind environment.
- Positive use of language is present in all interactions between school staff and the school community.
- Outstanding learning and teaching strategies exist, and an appropriate and purposeful curriculum is constantly being worked towards.
- Building, maintaining, and restoring relationships is central.
- Trauma informed work is embedded, and the school offers support and appropriate challenge to bring about the best outcomes for all learners.
- There are clear expectations around bullying and discrimination and the processes to deal with it effectively.
- Strategic planning and support to reduce barriers to learning and engagement is embedded within day-to-day school practice.
- Working with other agencies and the school's work as a community focused school is evident.
- Clear procedures, information, and expectations around attendance to school is available and promoted on a regular basis to parents/carers and learners.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full-time education

- The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any additional learning need they may have.
- Where parents decide to have their child registered at **Ysgol y Ddraig**, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly.
- For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Whilst the legal responsibility for regular school attendance rests with parents, **Ysgol y Ddraig** shares with them, and the Local Authority (LA), responsibility for encouraging good attendance and improving poor attendance.

- **Ysgol y Ddraig** is required by law to maintain specific records and to produce specified information on the attendance of its learners.
- Statutory obligation apart, **Ysgol y Ddraig** is committed to improvements in attendance standards as a direct stimulus to raising pupil achievement. Poor attendance has a direct impact on educational achievement and undermines the well-being of learners.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for ensuring that their child(ren) of compulsory school age (5-16), receives efficient full-time education, suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude, and any additional learning needs (ALN) the child may have. This can be through regular attendance at school or educated otherwise by the Local Authority.
- The law also permits parents to educate their child(ren) at home under the terms of Elective Home Education (EHE). The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education. **Ysgol y Ddraig** will contact the Vale of Glamorgan Inclusion Team to inform them of a parental enquiry or decision to EHE.
- Only the Headteacher of the **Ysgol y Ddraig** can authorise an absence of their learners.
- Compulsory school age means that children and young people should attend school from the start of the first term commencing after their fifth birthday and are of compulsory school age until after the last Friday in June of the school year in which they have their 16th birthday.
- If a registered pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under section 444 (1) (1a) (z) Education Act 1996.

Promoting good attendance

Ysgol y Ddraig will take opportunities to promote good attendance, through all communications with parents / carers and learners. At **Ysgol y Ddraig** this involves creating learning opportunities to explore the benefits of good attendance at school within classroom activities, assemblies and through visual and online campaigns.

Ysgol y Ddraig will support the local authority #MissSchoolMissOut campaign by engaging with the digital and physical materials that have been offered to schools.

Governor links

Ysgol y Ddraig will ensure that attendance is a standing agenda item for Governor's meetings and that attendance data is analysed and updates around attendance improvement plans are discussed at each meeting.

Ysgol y Ddraig has a named governor for attendance and school attendance policies are reviewed yearly by Governors.

Attendance Targets

Ysgol y Ddraig will work with the Vale of Glamorgan to set positive attendance targets on a whole school basis but also on an individual learner basis and to support reengagement of learners flexibly and creatively where they have lower than expected attendance levels.

Data Systems and Recording Procedures

Ysgol y Ddraig recognise that it is imperative both for safeguarding and attainment and that a robust absence reporting and recording system is in place for ensuring that both authorised and unauthorised absences are tracked and flagged both individually and by year group or cohort.

Ysgol y Ddraig recognises that registers are legal documents, and it is essential that they are completed in a timely and accurate way each day (AM and PM), and that parents / carers are informed at the earliest opportunity if their child is not present through first day response procedures. This is a key safeguarding duty for the school.

Absence Protocol includes the following:

- If your child is not in school and we have not been told why, we will send a text reminding you to contact the school and let us know why your child is off.
- If we do not hear back from you, we will try to contact you over the phone (please make sure your contact details are up-to-date).
- If no reason is given for absence, it will be treated as unauthorised. When your child returns to school, a reason will need to be given to the school office.
- If your child has been off for 3 days and NO reason has been given to school or contact made, it may be deemed appropriate for a staff member to visit the home to check in and see how we can support.
- If a reason for your child's absence HAS been given (such as sickness or illness) we ask for daily updates on your child's development/improvement. If your child is absent for longer than 5 school days in a row it may be deemed appropriate for a staff member to visit to check in and offer support.

It is also important that the most appropriate codes are being used, and that unknown reasons for absence are explored as soon as possible. Please see the document below for further information on coding. [guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

A parent / carer cannot authorise an absence. An absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher and should only be authorised if the absence was due to illness, medical/dental appointment, or religious reasons.

School based interventions

Ysgol y Ddraig follows a series of interventions / actions once a child's attendance levels / pattern of attendance becomes a cause of concern.

- Every child's attendance is monitored by the school attendance officer and those with poor attendance are flagged to the senior leadership team. Poor attendance is below 94%.
- Parents or carers with children whose attendance is below 94% will be contacted to discuss their child's attendance and ways in which the school can support an improvement.
- If, following contact attendance doesn't improve, further contact will be made by the school's attendance officer.
- Parents or carers with children whose attendance is below 90% will be sent a letter informing them of concerns around their child's attendance. Attendance under 90% classifies a learner as being persistently absent.
- If, following a letter of concern, attendance does not improve, the school will request a meeting with the parents or carers to discuss ongoing concerns. This meeting will look to offer support and put in place an attendance action plan to help support the child and family in improving attendance.
- If, following this meeting attendance does not improve then a referral may be made to the Vale of Glamorgan inclusion service to support with improving attendance. All parents with parental responsibility will be informed if a referral is submitted for the inclusion team to support improving attendance.

Penalties for non-attendance / FPNs / Prosecutions

Schools and the Local Authority may instigate legal penal measures for non-attendance. These include the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN). The full Welsh Government Guidance is located at [Guidance on penalty notices for regular non-attendance at schools](#)

Fixed Penalty Notices for non-attendance may be used after 10 unauthorised sessions of absence in a term. **Ysgol y Ddraig** will have tried a range of interventions to bring about positive change and penalty measures will be used only when reasonable efforts to engage with the family have been tried and have failed.

Ysgol y Ddraig will contact the Vale of Glamorgan Inclusion Team to advise on Education Act Prosecutions when required.

Holidays during term time

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, must apply for permission from the school in advance.**

The Governing Body of Ysgol y Ddraig has taken the decision to authorise holidays only where the pupil's average attendance for the past year (this includes the current academic year and the previous academic year) is greater than the school's attendance target set by the Vale of Glamorgan. The attendance target is 94% - this is the equivalent of 11 days of missed education per year.

Ysgol y Ddraig will also authorise family holidays where parents are able to demonstrate that **unique or exceptional circumstances** prevent the holiday from being taken outside of term time.

The considerations that the Headteacher will consider to 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, i.e.: parent, guardian, carer, sibling, or grandparent
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member, 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 considered but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for a one-off situation rather than regular recurring events
- The needs of families of service personnel will be considered 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 essential event that could not so reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Procedure for potential Child Missing in Education (CME)

If it is believed / suspected that a child or family have gone missing, the school will NOT remove any child from their roll without first completing the CME checklist procedures found in the Welsh Government Guidance below – Appendix 9 and then referring to the Inclusion Team for support - InclusionTeamReferrals@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

[statutory-guidance-help-prevent-children-young-people-missing-education.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

Where a pupil is missing for 10 school days, the school will notify the VOG Inclusion Team on the tenth day of school absence and email the completed 'Children and Young People Missing Education' Checklist to the Inclusion Team to advise that the pupil is believed to be missing.

A copy will be kept for school records and the My Concern records will be updated.

The school and the VOG Inclusion Team will then work in partnership to locate and ensure the safety of the pupil.

If the child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan and / or is a looked-after child, **Ysgol y Ddraig** will notify the Social Services Key Worker within the first 24 hours of the unauthorised absence if no home contact can be made.

Where it is otherwise suspected or known that a child or young person is at potential risk of harm, or where the school has information or reason to suspect the child has been a victim of criminal activity, the school should notify Social Care Services and / or the VOG Safeguarding Team and Police Child Protection Team immediately; and inform the VOG Inclusion Team as soon as possible afterwards.

Procedure for Elective Home Education (EHE) enquiries

Ysgol y Ddraig are aware that there are many reasons why parents may consider EHE. Sometimes it is due to philosophical / lifestyle decision. However, there are occasions when families consider this option due to unresolved issues in school or breakdown in relationships. **We** are mindful of this and the potential impact on the learner and family, and work to resolving issues in a timely and appropriate manner to avoid such situations.

However, in the rare occasion that the school cannot fully resolve any issues that may lead to the consideration of EHE, **Ysgol y Ddraig** will contact the VOG Inclusion Team to support the school and family and work together to help resolve any issues.

If the school is made aware that a parent/carer is considering EHE, the school will refer to the Welsh Government Guidance below for guidance and contact the VOG Inclusion Team at Inclusionteamreferrals@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

[Elective Home Education Guidance \(gov.wales\)](#)

[Home education: handbook for home educators \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

Reduced timetables / Pastoral Support Plan

Where a learner is not able to access a full-time school provision then this must be documented by the school and the VOG, using the process and format of a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP). PSPs should only be put in place for medical and social, emotional, and mental health needs of the learner and only if in the best interest of the learner.

Ysgol y Ddraig is aware that:-

- The PSP document is usually a multi-agency document and process and must include the engagement and consent of the parent / carer.
- There should also be regular reviews of the PSP where the parent/carer is in attendance. PSP's need to be reviewed at least every two weeks and no more than six weeks. The time threshold for a PSP to be in place should be limited to twelve weeks for actions to have taken place and progress made and for the learner to be ready to return to school full time.
- If a PSP is unsuccessful, it needs to be withdrawn and support from the inclusion service requested.

A PSP cannot be created and continued without the signed consent of the parent / carer.

The PSP will set out the reasons why a full-time education is not able to be accessed at that time but will also set out the measures which are in place to increase the learners access to full-time education as soon as is possible.

The school will engage with the Local Authority Inclusion team training on the use of PSPs and reduced timetables.

The SLT of **Ysgol y Ddraig** will closely monitor the use of PSPs and continually monitor and evaluate the impact of PSPs and report back to Governors on the extent of their use during the set Attendance agenda item at Governors meetings.

Referrals to LA Inclusion Team

Ysgol y Ddraig is aware that the VOG Inclusion Team accept referrals to support with low attendance issues.

Ysgol y Ddraig will submit a referral where there is a continued lack of improvement in attendance for a learner following the implementation of all school based documented interventions.

APPENDIX 1 – Resources

School based Attendance Action Plan / SIP section

School based procedures for Attendance recording and monitoring.

School based graduated response to low attendance / sporadic attendance

Link to LA Inclusion Team Referral Form

Welsh Government Attendance Framework documents

[School attendance and absence | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)