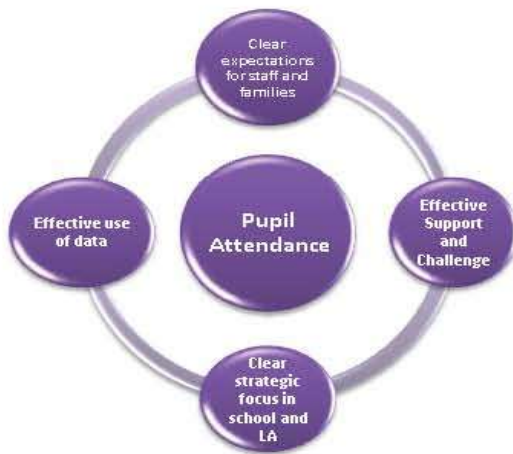


ATTENDANCE POLICY

2010 - 2012



1 Background and context

1.1 This policy for attendance has been produced by Torfaen Council in consultation with Torfaen schools in response to the requirements of:

- Torfaen Children and Young People's Plan 2007-2010
- Children Act – 2004
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act – 2003
- Crime and Disorder Act – 2002
- Education Act - 2002
- Crime and Disorder Act - 1998
- Education Act - 1996
- Children's Act - 1989
- Children's (Performances) Regulations - 1968
- Children Missing From Education

1.2 The policy document has four functions.

- a) It sets out the aims and objectives of Torfaen Council in seeking to ensure that school attendance is given the highest priority in Torfaen schools.
- b) It requires all educational settings to set realistic targets for overall improvement in levels of attendance.
- c) It outlines the services, which are available to support schools in maximising attendance and the structures within which those services are delivered.
- d) It provides a link to practical guidance for schools in ensuring best practice.

1.3 The Government aims to reduce all forms of absence to ensure maximum possible attendance so that children and young people derive full benefit from the educational opportunities provided for them. As a Council we recognise the central importance of pupil attendance in ensuring the safeguarding of pupils, the socialisation of pupils and of course, pupil's attainment and achievements. Without good attendance children are vulnerable to danger, missed opportunities and are at risk of poor personal outcomes in adult life.

- 1.4 Torfaen schools work within a range of communities, which represent a variety of social contexts. Some of these communities offer considerable challenges to their schools. Torfaen LA recognises the need to support, by means of the careful targeting of resources, the efforts of all its schools to achieve improved levels of attendance. In allocating resources, Torfaen will ensure those schools that face the greatest problems will receive the greatest help, whilst those performing effectively may receive a lighter touch.
- 1.5 Parents and carers have a duty in law (Education Act, 1996) to ensure that children and young people of statutory school age receive an appropriate education “by attendance at school or otherwise.” Schools also have statutory responsibilities with regard to the attendance of pupils of compulsory school age. The careful targeting of resources and support needs to be complemented by ensuring that these duties and responsibilities are carried out effectively for the benefit of all.
- 1.6 Schools and the LA have the duty to support parents and carers in meeting their responsibilities and, where necessary, to take action to enforce attendance. They also have an obligation to encourage pupils to attend school by providing the best possible quality of education and by making advice and support available to those pupils, and their parents and carers, who have difficulty in maintaining a satisfactory level of attendance.
- 1.7 The work of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) is of central importance in raising standards of attendance across Torfaen as a whole and within individual schools. Members of the EWS team work in schools, and with pupils, their parents and carers who have been identified as needing support to improve attendance. The service also has a wider role in linking pupils and families to other statutory and voluntary agencies, which can help.

2 Torfaen Priorities

- 2.1 The aims and objectives of Torfaen LA’s attendance policy are to maximise pupil attendance by:
 - promoting understanding between school, home, other professionals and volunteers from a range of agencies and services;

- providing a consistent, responsive and professional support service to pupils in school on all matters relating to school attendance and pupil welfare;
- developing, monitoring and evaluating, in partnership with school staff, policies and practices designed to increase rates of attendance and reduce exclusions;
- promoting equal opportunities and inclusive educational policies and practices for all pupils;
- ensuring that schools have appropriate policies and effective practices for the protection of children;
- monitoring and evaluating the work of LA services in order to improve its quality;
- promoting the value of education to parents and pupils who are experiencing difficulties in relation to attendance at school;
- identifying, celebrating and disseminating throughout the local authority and its schools good practice in achieving high levels of attendance.

2.2 In order to achieve the above aims and objectives, Torfaen Council will:

- support governing bodies of schools in setting their own targets for improvement which will be agreed with the Local Authority;
- support schools in the development of policies and procedures to secure high levels of attendance;
- through the work of the EWS, support schools which have identified pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern;
- support parents and carers through the individual casework undertaken by the EWS and other agencies.

- 2.3 The levels of service will be discussed with Headteachers and Governors (via the Headteachers meetings and the Torfaen Association of School Governors), annually, to reflect the commitment of the LA in involving schools more actively in the delivery of the EWS. Officers will give priority to schools whose pupil attendance is currently below the LA's targets.

3 Local Authority Action Plan

- 3.1 Torfaen LA will improve attendance by:

- a) assisting and supporting schools in setting targets for better attendance. All schools are expected to have their own targets for improving attendance, and this includes schools whose levels of attendance exceed local and national targets;
- b) supporting schools in developing policies to secure high levels of attendance;
- c) undertaking a review of attendance in all special needs resource bases and the special school. Despite the complex nature of their children's needs, which may reasonably result in higher than average levels of absence, there is a recognition that specialist placement attendance needs to be monitored and, in some circumstances, be subject to improvement targets;
- d) providing high-quality advice, analysis of data, inspection of registers and casework services to schools in order to ensure the prompt detection of children and young people whose attendance is a cause for concern;
- e) reviewing the use of statutory enforcement of attendance through the Magistrates' Court, the use of fixed penalty notices and parenting contracts and developing new ways of working to facilitate prompt responses to unauthorised absence.

4 Action by schools

- 4.1 Teaching and support staff in schools are in the front line of the drive to improve attendance. Whilst the LA can provide encouragement and support, teachers and others who work in schools are in daily contact with pupils and are able to forge effective links with parents. It is essential that the importance of good attendance is recognised in every school.
- 4.2 All schools need to be observant and alert to changes in patterns of attendance of individual children as well as of groups. Absence disrupts the continuity of learning and may lead to disaffection and educational failure. It is vital that regular attendance is established in primary schools and maintained through secondary education.
- 4.3 Good practice should be evidenced by:
- a) a designated member of the Senior Management Team and a designated member of the governing body of all schools having responsibility for all attendance matters, including the setting and regular review of targets for the whole school, for year or class groups and for individual pupils;
 - b) compliance with all legal requirements, including those relating to the removal of pupils from registers;
 - c) a written school policy which sets a school target for improving attendance. This should set out the school's expectations and priorities, strategies for improvement, advice for parents on procedures and the role of the Education Welfare Service in school;
 - d) all registers being completed promptly and accurately, in line with regulations (i.e. for morning and afternoon sessions) and are available to the Education Welfare Officer;
 - e) efficient systems of registration which encourage pupils and parents to account promptly for any absences. These should be in accordance with legal

requirements and should show a consistent approach to the classification of absences as either authorised or unauthorised;

- f) efficient and timely monitoring and referral procedures which ensure that pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern are
 - identified
 - supported through the school's own pastoral systems, including appropriate contact with parents
 - if required, brought to the attention of the LA

(Reference should be made to the LA Guidance on School Attendance)

- g) regular training for staff with registration responsibilities and the frequent monitoring of practice to ensure high standards by class teachers and others with key responsibilities;
- h) the development of special projects such as first-day contact schemes, attendance incentive schemes, individual and group awards, etc., in accordance with the needs of the school;
- i) a whole school attendance policy, understood by parents and pupils and applied consistently by staff;
- j) sound working relationships with the parents and carers of all pupils in order to encourage them to have positive attitudes to education and to support the school by ensuring that their children demonstrate high levels of attendance;
- k) involvement of the EWS once school based interventions have been exhausted, with pupils who have difficulties and make sufficient staff time available to enable EWS intervention to be effectively managed;
- l) strategies for re-integrating pupils who have been long-term absentees;

- m) support for parents who have difficulty in understanding written and/or oral communications;
- n) the availability of accurate, reliable and up to date information about attendance to enable the monitoring and evaluation of attendance data.