

TASKER MILWARD VC SCHOOL

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Issue No	Author/Owner	Date Written	Approved by Governors on	Comments
Issue 1	CW	Revised 06/04	12 December 2006	
Issue 2	CP	Revised 16 Oct 2012	November 2012	
Issue 3	JC	Revised Jan 2015	February 2015	
Issue 4	JC	Revised Jan 2016		

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1. Rationale

The Governing Body and Staff of Tasker Milward VC School are fully committed to the principle of maximum attendance by all pupils in their care and acknowledge the vital role that all parents have to play in ensuring that their children attend school regularly. They believe that placing value on high attendance will help to ensure that pupils receive full advantage of the educational opportunities which the school offers.

Whilst they recognise that pupils are inevitably absent from school on occasions because of illness or unavoidable family commitments, they will do everything in their power to facilitate and to encourage the highest

standards of attendance.

2. Aims

The Governing Body and Staff of the school seek to promote maximum attendance by pupils in order to:

- Motivate pupils to achieve their fullest potential
- Maintain continuity of learning
- Assist the social development of children
- Contribute to higher standards of attainment
- Lessen the likelihood of disaffection and/or under achievement
- Enhance self-esteem
- Contribute to pupil's safety.

3. Principles

Parents of registered pupils have a legal duty under the Education Act 1996 to make sure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis. Permitting unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents may be reported to the Education Authority if problems cannot be resolved by agreement.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason (i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause).

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This includes keeping children off school unnecessarily, holidays in term time, truancy, absences which have not been properly explained, and children who arrive at school too late to receive a mark in the register.

Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the LA Attendance Officer will

become involved. He or she will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement, but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child.

- Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Pupil Support Officer themselves to ask for advice. They are independent of the school although their office is in the school building. Their telephone number is 01437 764147.

4. Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

1. Illness and other legitimate reasons.

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the first day of absence. When the child returns, he or she must bring a written note, signed by a parent for each period of absence. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. In exceptional circumstances, further evidence of a child's illness, such as doctors note, may be requested. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time; notes will not necessarily be accepted as providing valid reasons. It is not usually appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, day trips etc. Leave may, however, be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which take place during school time.

2. Holidays

Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday in term time, it is disruptive to the child's education and to the school. All holiday leave in term time is at the discretion of the head teacher. It is the policy of the county council that holidays will be classed as an unauthorised absence unless extenuating circumstances apply. This is at the discretion of the head teacher.

3. Lateness

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for that session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Late arrival after registration without good reason is counted as unauthorised absence. Pupils who are late to school will receive a 15 minute detention in the first instance. Parents of pupils who are persistently late could be subject to a fixed penalty notice issued by the Local Authority. See Appendix 2.

5. Monitoring of Pupil Attendance

(i) The Role of the Form Tutor

The form tutor is the person most likely to influence all pupils in the class with regard to the value of high attendance and is better placed to link the evidence about attendance to the broader context of the pupils educational performance than any other person in the school. For these reasons, the greatest responsibility vis a vis attendance lies with the form tutor.

In the first instance, the monitoring of pupil attendance is carried out by form tutors during morning registration periods. Afternoon registration takes place at the beginning of lesson four. It is the responsibility of the form tutor to maintain an accurate attendance register and to ensure that pupil absence is properly explained by a parental note, receipt of which is coded accordingly in the register. The form tutor should ensure that the register is kept up to date, this is vital if attendance is to be monitored accurately. Where there is a period of unexplained absence for longer than three days, the form tutor is expected to notify the Head of Year immediately so that the appropriate attendance letter can be sent out.

Form Tutors can do much to contribute to high attendance by pupils, through close monitoring and the use of praise for pupils whose attendance is good as well as by supporting the BFL scheme.

(ii) The Role of the Subject Teacher

Whilst it is the form tutors responsibility to encourage high standards of attendance and to monitor attendance on a daily basis, attendance at individual lessons can only be monitored by subject teachers. **All subject teachers are required to maintain an electronic record of pupils' attendance at lessons.** In this way, sporadic truancy or avoidance of particular lessons can be quickly identified and investigated. Unexplained absences from individual lessons can then be referred to the Year Head for investigation as necessary.

Subject teachers should discourage requests to leave the classroom during lessons (except when a pupil is ill or wishes to visit the toilet). Any pupil who has to leave the classroom, should have his or her diary signed to that effect.

(iii) The Role of the Head of Year

It is the responsibility of the Head of Year to monitor attendance registers on a weekly basis and to follow up unexpected and/or prolonged absences through contact with the form tutor, the child's parents and the LA Attendance Officer. Where an individual pupil, a particular form or group of pupils has attendance which appears significantly lower than expected, the Year Head will investigate and, if appropriate, develop strategies to improve attendance in conjunction with the Senior Head of Year responsible for monitoring attendance.

(iv) Headteacher

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for attendance. The day to day monitoring of attendance is devolved to the Assistant Headteacher (Rev J Cecil) who will make the Headteacher aware of attendance issues within the school.

(v) The Role of the Head of Year management Committee

The Management Committee, which meets half termly, is chaired by the Assistant Headteacher (Rev J Cecil) and is responsible, in relation to attendance, for:

- Monitoring pupil attendance across year groups
- Considering strategies for the raising of pupil attendance as and when required
- Periodic review of the schools attendance policy.
- Bringing whole school issues relating to pupil attendance to the attention of the School Leadership Group.

(vi) Attendance Statistics

Statistics for attendance, authorised absence and unauthorised absence are monitored by Heads of Year, the Assistant Headteacher and Head Teacher on a monthly basis and are published to governors at half termly intervals and to parents annually in the Governors Report to Parents and in the school prospectus.

(viii) The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer will work at the discretion of the Assistant Headteacher and Business Manager to promote good attendance throughout the school. They will implement the procedures highlighted in Appendix 1, the ERW non attendance guidelines issued to schools in 2014.

6. Liaison with External Agencies

It is fully recognised that the work of external agencies contributes greatly

towards ensuring excellent attendance. Staff responsible for the monitoring of pupil absence work closely with external agencies including the Psychological Service Hospital Class and Education Welfare.

The schools **Educational Psychologist** visits the school and pupils with long term attendance problems and those with school phobia may be referred for counselling and support.

The LA Attendance Officer is available to pastoral staff once every fortnight at which time pupils with attendance problems are identified and monitored and action agreed. The LA Attendance Officer is also responsible for liaison with the school and for ensuring that the terms of the Education Supervision Orders are met.

A record of all referrals made to the LA Attendance Officer is maintained in school.

In the event of a child's persistent non-attendance or casual truancy giving rise to concerns regarding the child's safety, referral would normally be made by Year Head, Assistant Headteacher or Inclusion Manager either to the The Child Protection officer or the Headteacher (where an issue of child protection is identified) or directly to **Dyfed Powys Police or Social Services Department**.

7. The Role of Parents

Parents can do much to support and encourage their children to attend school regularly, notably by placing value on high attendance. Where parental support is not forthcoming, it is essential that we make every effort to involve parents at the earliest opportunity to improve their child's attendance and that we make clear our reasons for doing so. Increasing parental awareness of attendance issues and parental responsibilities regarding attendance is one of our current objectives.

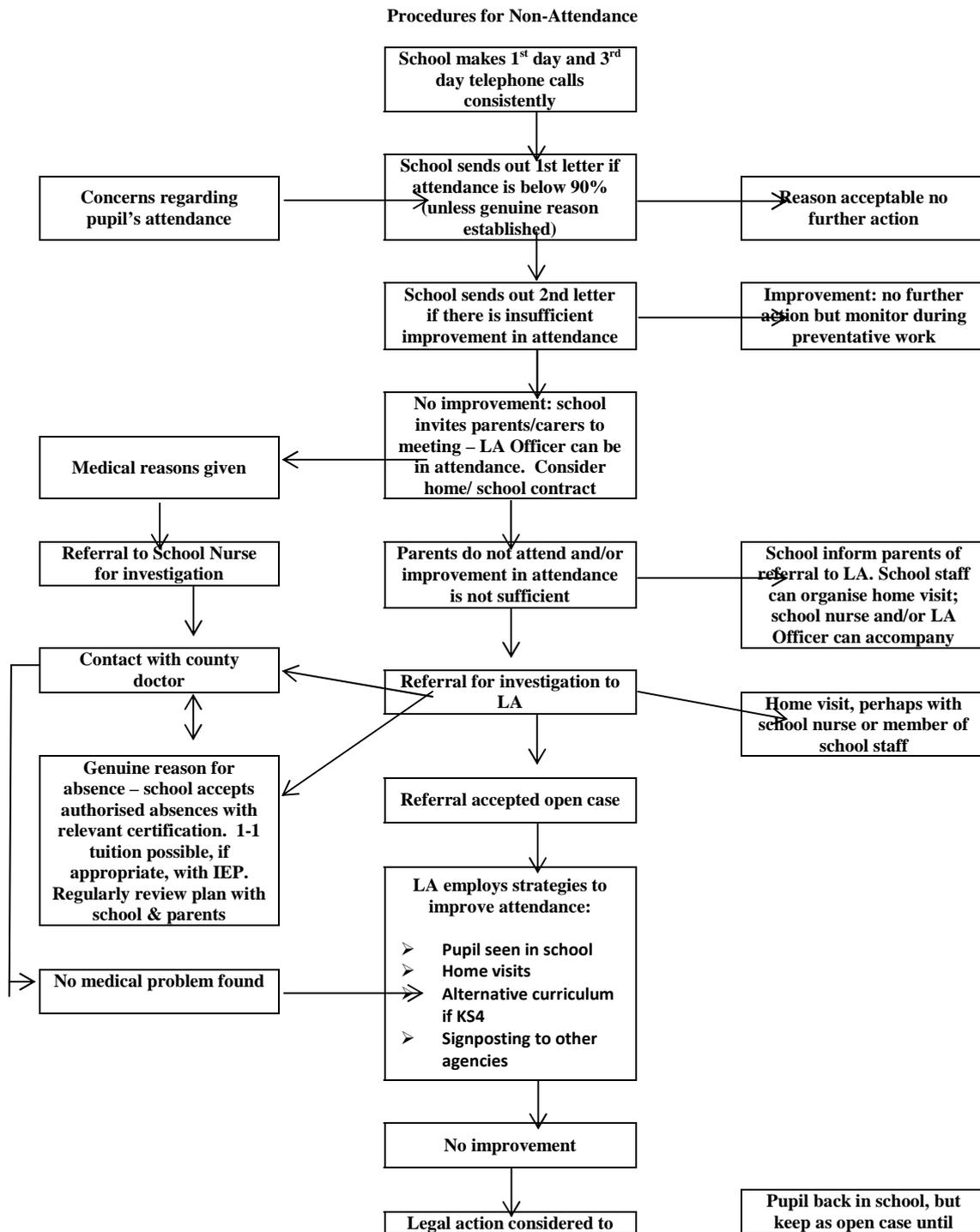
8. Rewards for High/Improved Attendance

It is important that pupils are aware that we value high attendance and that we give full acknowledgement to those pupils who achieve and maintain high attendance over a period of time. Incentives include:

- Verbal praise (from tutor/subject teacher)
- Note in Diary (from tutor/subject teacher)
- Letter to parents (Year Heads)
- Half termly attendance prizes (presented by HoY in assembly)
- Attendance prizes at the annual Celebrating Success assembly

Attendance is now an integral part of the BFLs scheme and Tocyn Da's should be awarded for good attendance by form tutors on a regular basis.

Appendix 1



include Education
Supervision Order and the
issuing of fixed penalty
notices

attendance at acceptable
level, then monitor in
preventative

Appendix 2



Penalty Notices

This letter alerts you to the introduction of penalty notices for unauthorised absences from school from January 2015.

The local authority and the ERW consortium believe that any absence from school, for whatever reason, is detrimental to a child's long term life opportunities, so should be avoided if at all possible. Reducing absence from school is a key priority, both nationally and locally, because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

A penalty notice is an alternative to prosecution with the aim of seeking to secure an improvement in the pupil's attendance. A penalty notice can be requested by the school, the police or from within the local authority's Education Inclusion Service in relation to unauthorised non-attendance at school. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, then it is the headteacher's decision to accept, or not accept this, and ensure that the register is marked appropriately.

If a notice has been requested, the parent/carer will receive a warning letter that gives them 15 days to provide evidence to the local authority that the unauthorised absences are not justified and that the register should be amended. If the unauthorised absences are due to taking a holiday in school time then a warning will not be issued. Please note that there is no limit to the number of formal warnings which can be issued

If the school attendance does not improve then the penalty notice will be issued. Payment of £60 will be due in the first instance which will rise to

£120 if not paid promptly. If the penalty is not paid then the local authority will consider issuing prosecution proceedings against parent(s) for the original offence, which is 'failure to ensure regular attendance at school of the registered pupil' under Section 444 (1) or (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

Please remember that if there are reasons why your child is missing school then you can seek support and guidance from staff at your child's school. Please do ask before the non-attendance becomes an issue.

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/schoolattendance