

Dear parent/carer,

As you will be aware, the covid pandemic has caused significant disruption to school life over the last few years. Pupil attendance has been particularly affected as we all followed government advice on staying home and protecting the NHS. We understand that it was a difficult time for pupils and families, and therefore, I am encouraging all parents/carers to work with schools to ensure all learners attend as regularly as possible for this academic year.

Pupils with poor attendance are more likely to fall behind with their work, have gaps in their learning, and therefore, achieve lower examination results. This will affect their life chances for the future.

We all have the responsibility to ensure that our pupils achieve the best start in life, so they can reach their full potential.

A pupil who achieves 90% attendance is still missing out on a significant amount of education.

90% attendance = ½ a day missed every week

90% attendance over 5 years of school = ½ a school year missed

What the pupils said

In the summer term, we asked pupils about attendance. Pupils were keen to attend school every day but felt they sometimes needed encouragement and praise from school and home. I urge parents to contact the school if a pupil is unhappy about attending. Together, we can work together to support your child to access their education.

How can the Local Authority support you?

Education welfare officers (EWO) support schools, pupils and parents/carers to encourage children to attend school regularly. This includes helping children to overcome problems that prevent them from attending school.

Should you wish to discuss your child's attendance, please ask your child's school for the contact details of the EWO.

If your child does not attend school regularly, the headteacher will want to meet with you to discuss the reason for your child not attending school. If attendance continues to be a problem, school may refer to the Education Welfare Service.

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What about authorised absences?

There may be times when your child is ill, and this is to be expected. They may also need to go to the doctor or the dentist, but these appointments should be made **OUTSIDE** school hours whenever possible.

What about holidays?

Please refer to your school's attendance policy for further information on individual schools. Holiday forms can be obtained from the main school office.

What the law says

All children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) **must** receive a suitable full-time education. As a parent/carer you are responsible for making sure this happens and you have a vital role to ensure and encourage regular attendance at school. Most school Governing Bodies have opted to use fixed penalty notices for parents/carers who do not work with the school to support their child in receiving a regular education.

Lateness

Please ensure that your child arrives at school on time. It can be very stressful to arrive late for school. A pupil arriving late also disrupts lessons for others. Persistent lateness can be classed as unauthorised absence; and will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.

Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership with schools and other education settings for the benefit of all pupils. We appreciate and understand the challenges in life that can sometimes contribute towards poor attendance. Everyone working in education across Caerphilly Local Authority wants to help in any way possible to encourage regular attendance in school.

Paul Warren
Strategic Lead for School Improvement