



## **Attendance Policy**

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Governing Body held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021;19<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Review Date: June 2027**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson schools  
governing body, on behalf of the governing body**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Headteacher**

**Distribution: Staff, governors, pupils, parents/carers and  
interested parties.**

## **Introduction**

Ysgol Ty Coch Special School is a Rights Respecting School. As a Rights Respecting School, we aim to embed children's human rights in our ethos and school culture. We base our practice on the principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. Working within these principles not only empowers our children and young people, but also leads to enhanced learning, improved standards and better relationships.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely-ratified international human rights treaty in history. This policy relates to Article 3 and 28 of the UNCRC.

**Article 3:** All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.

**Article 28:** Children have a right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

At Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School it is recognised that punctual and regular school attendance is an essential precondition of school inclusion and a prerequisite to effective learning. For a small but significant number of children poor school attendance is a direct cause of their social exclusion and under-achievement.

At Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School everyone is committed to improving levels of school attendance and punctuality by:

- promoting the value and importance of regular/punctual school attendance incidentally and by specific activities such as focussed attendance assemblies
- aiming to reduce all forms of unjustified absenteeism, especially levels of persistent absenteeism, by interaction with parents/ carers and support from the Attendance and Wellbeing Service
- where possible, providing accommodation for health and social care related practitioners to undertake clinics at school thereby, reducing the need for the child to be absent from school to attend appointments elsewhere
- working closely with colleagues from the Attendance and Well-being Service
- rewarding pupils who achieve a high level of attendance to recognise their achievement and to encourage other pupils to emulate these achievements
- making sure that all parents/carers are aware of the attendance requirements and processes

The following strategy will be employed to improve levels of school attendance and punctuality:

- The provision of one to one support to individual pupils who experience difficulties in attending school regularly
- The provision of consistent and equitable support to parents/carers ensuring, through an appropriate balance of assistance and insistence that all parents/carers are able to meet their legal responsibilities in relation to school attendance
- The development of effective multi-agency working practices in order to facilitate early intervention and the delivery of a seamless service

### **Responsibilities of the School**

Staff and governors at Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School are responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to their non-attendance.

Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School adopts a positive and proactive approach towards attendance matters and encourages parents/carers to take an active role in improving levels of attendance, punctuality and in reducing absenteeism.

The school has a legal obligation to:

- be open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year
- maintain attendance registers in accordance with the relevant regulations
- accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness
- clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the Welsh Government.  
In line with this ruling, parents/carers are reminded that it is the decision of the Head Teacher as to whether or not an absence will be authorised
- submit regular pupil absence returns to the Local Authority
- publish the overall levels of pupil attendance, for each term, in the Governors Annual Report to Parents
- ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parents/carers through parents' evenings or other communications.
- remind parents/carers of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their children's regular/punctual attendance at school
- collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set the targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, peer groups and the whole school
- provide clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence
- identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absences and lateness (allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities)

- ensure positive dialogue with the Local Authority's Transport Department and transport contractors to ensure the efficient pick up/drop off of the pupil at the appropriate time (please refer to the school's Safe Use of Transport Policy and RCT School Transport Policy 2017/2018)
- recognise the crucial importance of early intervention and provide appropriate strategies
- make provision for first day, fourth day and every consecutive fourth day of absence contact, particularly in relation to pupils who are known to be poor attendees or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk
- be alert to critical times such as: at times of assessments or tests or peer group disagreements.

In either situation, inform a member of SMT who will deal discreetly with this matter.

- have in place/apply robust anti-bullying policies to ensure absenteeism is not a direct result of fear from bullying incidents
- identify an interesting, flexible and accessible curriculum which encourages regular attendance
- stress to parents/carers the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to the adverse impact that taking family holidays during term-time can have on pupil progress/achievement

Parents/carers are reminded that the taking of family holidays, during term time, cannot be authorised unless they fall under the rules covering exceptional circumstances. A Holiday Notification Form must be completed if parents/carers are considering taking pupils on holiday during term time. These forms are available from school and each request will be considered on its own merit, in line with the Welsh Government guidelines.

### **Responsibilities of Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers are responsible **in law** for ensuring that their children attend school on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn. Parents/carers are also responsible for ensuring that their children stay at school once they have registered. Parents/carers can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. To this end parents/carers should:

- ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day
- ensure that, where appropriate, their child is ready to board the transport provided by the Local Authority when it arrives to collect their child
- take an active interest on the child's school - life and work
- attend parents' evenings and other school events
- ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time
- pay attention to letters from school

- ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance
- always notify school **by telephone before 9.30am** on the first, fourth and every consecutive fourth day of any absence
- confirm the absence, in writing, in the Home/School Book when the child returns to school
- be alert to critical times such as: at times of assessments or tests or peer group disagreements.

In either situation, a parent may speak to a member of staff in confidence, who will discreetly help with this matter.

**To comply with the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 (Welsh Government document), the school will operate in accordance with the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices for regular non-attendance at school.**

**It remains the discretion of the Head Teacher whether to authorise absences in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 (Welsh Government document) and any attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the Local Authority.**

### **Support from Professionals Outside School**

In some cases, it may be necessary to involve professionals from the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS) or the Social Services Department to assist school staff in working through the causes of non-attendance. The AWS will assist in removing the barriers which may prevent a child receiving education.

The AWS will employ three main interconnected and interdependent strategies to ensure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly and punctually as follows:

- As representatives of the Local Authority, monitoring attendance through the regular inspection of registers and liaison with school staff
- Undertaking individual casework with non-attending pupils and their parents/carers
- Offering strategic advice, support and challenge to enable schools to develop improved systems and practices for managing attendance

Where a pupil becomes a perpetual non-attender, advice will be sought from the Local Authority as to the next steps required for the management of the case.

Parents/carers are reminded that, in instances where the persistent absenteeism of their child becomes particularly difficult to resolve, their case could appear before the Magistrates Court under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act.

## **Pupils Who Abscond from School**

Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School has a separate policy covering pupils who abscond.

## **Working with Parents/Carers**

The staff at Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School will ensure that all school-based avenues, for resolving the issues of non-attendance by pupils, will be taken prior to involving other professionals.

Where there are concerns relating to the care or safety of pupils during periods of absence, the measures incorporated in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies will be used to ensure the pupil's health and safety at all times.

Where there are medical concerns or issues, all reasonable attempts to resolve these will be considered in line with the school's Healthcare Needs Policy. Further advice will be sought, as appropriate, from the pupil's medical consultants, GP or other medical practitioners.

Parents/Carers are encouraged to have an open and honest dialogue with staff at the school to ensure that pupils' attendance is maintained and promoted.

Any reports of bullying will be dealt with under the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

Any reports of racism will be dealt with under the school's Anti-Racist Policy.

## **Safeguarding**

The safeguarding of pupils is of paramount importance. The school understands its duty to keep learners safe and adheres to the PREVENT agenda and broader safeguarding guidelines. Regular and well-planned lessons are taught in e-safety and Sex and Relationship education to ensure our pupils are given the very best advice on how to keep themselves safe. The measures incorporated in the Attendance Policy supports the safeguarding of the pupils at the school.

## **Health and Safety**

The school follows the recommendations in the Local Authority's (LA) and school governing body's Health and Safety Policies. Staff accept the responsibility to plan safe experiences and to match the level of adult supervision and support to the degree of risk involved as determined by the dynamic risk assessment. This includes risk assessing vocational learning opportunities.

Any specific issues relating to Health and Safety that require immediate attention must be brought to the attention of the Head teacher, Curriculum co-ordinator and the Health and Safety Officer.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The school operates a policy of equality for all pupils regardless of gender, ethnicity, religious beliefs, race or culture.

All staff at Ysgol Ty Coch Special School take account of each pupil's learning styles/needs and their development and wellbeing; and how these are affected by a range of social, religious, ethnic, gender, cultural and linguistic differences.

Pupils identified as Children Looked After (CLA), More Able and Talented (MAT) and those on the child protection register are supported in line with their particular needs to afford them equal access to the curriculum.

### **Staff Development**

Staff will have access to in-service training as and when appropriate. This is in accordance with the school's policy for staff development. Any new developments in the requirements relating to pupil's attendance at school will be disseminated to all staff by the Senior Leadership Team.

### **Role of Head teacher**

- To keep abreast of the legislation/directions from the Welsh Government and the Local Authority relating to school attendance.
- To ensure that all appropriate information relating to school attendance is disseminated to school staff.
- To ensure that all staff follow the reporting/recording requirements of the attendance regulations.
- To ensure budget provision for staff training, including accessing specialized skills from external providers

### **Role of Senior Leaders with responsibility for Attendance**

- To lead Attendance meetings every 3 weeks with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) reviewing all pupils with attendance under 60%.
- To arrange actions to address pupil absenteeism working with parents/carers, the Disabled Childrens' Team (DCT), the Attendance & Wellbeing Service (AWS), the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the school outreach team.
- To meet with the Attendance and Wellbeing Service officer linked to school termly to review pupils with less than 82.5% attendance.
- To invite the Attendance and Wellbeing Service officer to Attendance SLT meetings.
- To link attendance and safeguarding concerns and address as appropriate.

### **Links to Other Policies**

This policy should be read with the following:

- Absconding Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Anti-racist Policy
- Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Equality Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Healthcare Needs Policy
- Safeguarding Policy



**Attendance Advice for Parents/Guardians**

The Welsh Government requires all children of statutory school age to attain a minimum of 95% attendance each term.

The Local Authority must be notified as soon as any pupil's level of attendance falls below 86% in any term. This level of attendance will result in the absence being referred to the Authority's Attendance and Wellbeing Service.

Attendance operating procedures:

- School starts at 8.50am and morning registration is open for all pupils from 8.50am – 9.20am.
- Afternoon sessions for primary age pupils begin at 12.15pm and afternoon registration is open from 12.15pm-12.45pm
- Afternoon sessions for secondary age pupils begin at 12.45pm and afternoon registration is open from 12.45pm – 1.15pm
- If students arrive late to school they will be entered onto the attendance register as 'Late before registration closes' or 'Late after registration closes'. This is in line with attendance regulations.
- If your child is ill you must inform the school by 9.00am (9.30am at the very latest), on the first day of absence. In the event you do not make contact a member of the office staff will contact you, first by telephone and then by text message.
- When your child is off school for more than one day you must contact the school on the first day of the absence then on the fourth day and every following fourth day until the child returns to school.
- Parents/Carers must not pass information of their child's absences or medical appointments to transport staff or another pupil. It is the parents/carers responsibility to telephone school to report any absences.
- If a reason for absence is not received the absence will be classified as unauthorised.
- We acknowledge that the pupils attending Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School have significantly more medical appointments and assessments to attend.
- If the details of a medical appointment are known in advance please inform your child's class teacher, as soon as possible, via the home/school book or by a note.
- Where possible, all dentist and G.P. appointments should be made outside of school hours.

- If your child has a medical appointment e.g. 10.30am or 2.00pm and they do not attend school for the morning or afternoon session (as appropriate), it will be classed as an unauthorised absence.
- **All appointment letters/cards must be shown to a member of staff before the pupil attends the appointment. The card/letter will be noted and returned immediately. This is a requirement of the attendance regulations.**
- Parents/carers are reminded that the taking of family holidays, during term time, cannot be authorised unless they fall under the rules covering exceptional circumstances. A Holiday Notification Form must be completed if parents/carers are considering taking pupils on holiday during term time. These forms are available from school and each request will be considered on its own merit, in line with the Welsh Government guidelines.

**It remains the discretion of the Head Teacher whether to authorise absences in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 (Welsh Government document) and any attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the Local Authority.**

**To comply with the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 (Welsh Government document), the school will operate in accordance with the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices for regular non-attendance at school.**

### **Attendance Achievements**

In collaboration with the Attendance and Well-being Service the school holds 'Attendance Assemblies' to reiterate the importance of good attendance to the students.

Throughout the academic year pupils will be rewarded with certificates for excellent attendance.

At the end of the academic year pupils with 100% attendance will receive gift cards, courtesy of the Friends of Ty Coch, to recognise and celebrate their achievement.

### **Appendix B**

#### **Attendance Guidelines for Staff**

Please find below the attendance guidelines to be operated at Ysgol Tŷ Coch Special School:

- School starts at 8.50am and morning registration is open for all pupils from 8.50am – 9.20am.
- Afternoon sessions for primary age pupils begin at 12.15pm and afternoon registration is open from 12.15pm-12.45pm
- Afternoon sessions for secondary age pupils begin at 12.45pm and afternoon registration is open from 12.45pm – 1.15pm

- If students arrive late to school they will be entered onto the attendance register as 'Late before registration closes' or 'Late after registration closes'
- If any of the children on the register have not arrived and you have not received a reason for the absence from the parent/carer you must inform a member of the admin. staff.
- If a pupil is absent parents/carers are required to contact school by 9.00am (9.30am at the latest) with the reason for the absence. If there is not contact made by this time then a member of the office staff will attempt to make contact with the parent/carer.
- In order to save your record of the non-attendance you will place the code 'N' into Sims. As soon as you are told of the reason for the absence you must update the records e.g. M, I etc.
- In the event of a reason for the absence not being received it will be classified as 'unauthorised'. Staff **must not** leave the code 'N' on Sims for the day – it must be changed
- Staff must not accept reasons for absence from transport drivers, escorts or another pupil. If any absence details are received in this way a member of the admin. Staff must be informed so that they may follow the agreed procedure in attempting to make contact with the parent/carer. Until the reason for the absence is established please adopt the above point.
- Parents/carers are asked to make Dentist and G.P. appointments outside of school hours whenever possible. We appreciate this facility is not available for hospital appointments.
- Whenever a pupil attends a medical appointment during school hours parents/carers are required to show a member of the school staff the appointment letter/card. This is a requirement of the attendance regulations.
- The letter/card does not need to be retained by the member of staff who receives it. The member of staff must ensure that the details on the card/letter are recorded in the comments box.
- Comments box – this must be completed on a daily basis for all absences e.g. Under code 'I' Jo Bloggs is off sick with upset tummy, code 'M' Jo Bloggs is at the hospital and due in at 11am or 'O' office tried to contact parents but were unable to gather a reason.
- If any member of staff needs to change a code after having closed Sims for the session, contact a member of the admin. Staff and they will assist in rectifying the situation in line with agreed procedures.
- The office staff will write to parents/carers of pupils whose absence is entered as unauthorised to highlight to them the need for them to make contact as per the requirements of the regulations, from Welsh Government and the Local Authority.
- If there are any aspects of the attendance procedure that any member of the classroom staff is uncertain about, they should seek assistance from the administration staff.

### **Attendance Codes**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| / | Present (am)  |
| \ | Present (pm)  |
| B | Educated off site (no dual registration)            |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances                      |
| D | Dual registration (attending another establishment) |
| E | Excluded (no alternative provision made)            |
| G | Family holiday (not agreed)                         |
| I | Illness   |
| J | Interview   |
| L | Late (before registers closed)                      |
| M | Medical/Dental appointments                         |
| N | No reason provided for absence yet                  |
| O | Unauthorised Absence (not covered by another code)  |
| P | Approved sporting activity                          |
| R | Religious observance                                |
| S | Study leave   |
| T | Traveller absence                                   |
| U | Late (after the register is closed)                 |
| W | Work experience                                     |
| X | Non-compulsory school age absence                   |
| - | All should attend/no mark recorded                  |

**Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - Summary of Guidelines for Supporting Attendance in Schools**

**Scope of the Audit**

In accordance with the Internal Audit Plan for financial year 2012/13, agreed by Audit Committee, a review of the procedures for the accurate recording and registration of attendance.

**Objectives of the Audit**

The primary purpose of the review was to provide management with an opinion on the adequacy and accuracy of the recording of attendance.

**Audit Opinion**

The following findings were outlined in the Audit report:

1. The infrastructure required to provide guidance and also to record pupil attendance is in place at each of the schools selected during our review however; the application of the procedures and use of the systems require improvement.
2. Recording a pupil's attendance at school accurately is important for the pupil, the school and the Council. Noting the above, assurance cannot be provided specifically in relation to the attendance codes used by all 8 schools visited by Internal Audit for the academic year ending 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012.
3. Errors were identified at each school visited with accuracy and consistency in the uses of codes requiring improvement.
4. It was difficult on times to establish why a code was used for a particular session, as the use of the 'notes' provision on the system to record all key information was not always populated, and supplementary documents destroyed. Therefore, to ensure a complete portrait of a pupil's attendance, completion of this field should be compulsory and not just deemed 'useful'.
5. Finally, Management should ensure that all staff responsible for entering attendance codes have a thorough understanding of attendance and registration and are reminded of the importance to use the correct codes which are essential in order to meet legal requirements.

**School Actions**

The following actions have been identified as those that need to be undertaken by schools. The existing RCT School Attendance Toolkit contains much of the guidance and advice required to implement these actions, however where appropriate further advice is detailed in this report under the actions identified.

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| <b>S1</b> | All schools to submit a copy of the school's Attendance Policy ratified by the Governing Body to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service  |
| <b>S2</b> | All schools will take an attendance register twice a day   |
| <b>S3</b> | All school registers will close after 30 minutes, after which ALL pupils will be registered using the U code.  |
| <b>S4</b> | All Headteachers to remind staff that the accurate registering of pupils is a legal requirement and failure to do so can lead to formal action.  |
| <b>S5</b> | All Headteachers to inform staff that use of the relevant notes fields on SIMS is <b>compulsory</b> for all codes where richer context of detail would be useful in determining patterns of absence to support safeguarding of pupils. |

#### **Guidance note - School Attendance Registers**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. The principal purpose of a registration period is to enable staff to provide a positive welcome to pupils and using the time to support the pastoral element of school life is invaluable. Attendance registration information is legally binding and expected to be kept up to date and stored securely and additionally helps to identify quickly those pupils who might need extra support or are causing concern, particularly for safeguarding.

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| <b>S6</b> | All schools will ensure that parents/carers have written notification every time that their child's absence is recorded as unauthorised.   |
| <b>S7</b> | All schools will ensure that all missing marks ("N" codes) are removed within 1 day and the absences categorised accurately. Where no reason for absence is received the O Code is to be used. |

#### **Guidance note - Unauthorised absence**

Whenever pupils are absent and school has not been told of the reason all schools are to use the O code. There is a facility within the SIMS registration system to use the N code as a temporary "holding" code for a maximum of one day, during which time school staff must make rigorous enquiries to confirm the reason for absence. The decision on whether the reason is satisfactory rests with school and not with parents/carers. It is expected that all schools have an up to date Attendance Policy in place outlining the processes and procedures for managing attendance related issues. Schools already have well established communication systems with parents and school policies should reflect that communication, clearly outlining the actions that will

be taken whenever a concern has been identified and the decision made to escalate interventions to the local authority.

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| <b>S8</b> | All schools will record all sickness absence details using the commentary notes field in SIMS e.g. nature of illness, medical evidence received, investigations undertaken by staff. |
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### **Guidance note - Recording Sickness Absence**

In the majority of cases a parental note/contact explaining that their child's absence is due to illness can be accepted without question or concern and in those circumstances schools will use the "I" code, accepting it is genuine. To monitor individual pupil sickness absence it is important to keep track of the reason for each illness as this may well provide school with the evidence that all may not be well with that pupil's health and well-being. There is a comment box in the SIMS registration system which, if used effectively to record the nature of the illness will provide a richer context of detail which would be useful in determining patterns of absence as well as providing detailed reports for overall absence analysis for management purposes. Having this information will help to identify whether there have been or needs to be an investigation into the absences or whether there are pupils with high levels of sickness absence needing access to additional support.

### **Guidance note - Incorrect Code Use**

There is evidence highlighted in the audit report that schools indiscriminately used codes for pupil registration that do not comply with the accurate description/meaning provided. This has caused confusion as to whether those pupils were in fact on school premises at the time of the audit, in attendance elsewhere or actually absent from school. The intention of introducing the codes in 2010 was to facilitate consistency in recording pupil absence information, allowing for a better understanding of school absence and improving methods to track and safeguard pupils. The codes available offer a fairly comprehensive range of reasons to justify and categorise absence and schools have no legitimate reasons to manipulate them.

### **Conclusion**

It is important to reiterate that **it is an offence for schools not to maintain accurate registers.** The *Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010*, identify the duty schools have to ensure that clear and efficient registration practices are in place, that are accessible to the Local Authority for monitoring purposes. A school register is a legal document that may be required to be presented as court evidence in Local Authority prosecutions for non-attendance. Schools have a statutory duty under **Section 175 of the Education Act 2002** to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This can only be fulfilled through effective registration systems and active, whole school monitoring of pupil absence, in order to support and promote regular school attendance.

Response to consideration of school comments to Audit recommendations to improve secondary school registration practices  
July 2013

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| <b>Action</b>      | <b>S3</b> All school registers will close after 30 minutes, after which ALL pupils will be registered using the U code.  |
| <b>Comment</b>     | This we feel will only prove to be a disincentive for pupils to come to school as soon as possible following unavoidable early morning absence e.g. if a pupil arrives late after a potentially unavoidable incident such as an emergency, or simply oversleeping there is no (attendance) incentive for them to hurry to school as they will not gain a mark even though they are present   |
| <b>LA response</b> | WG Guidance states that all registers should close 30 minutes following the main registration period for that group. It could also be argued that setting this threshold would act as an incentive for pupils who arrive 35-40 mins late to make the effort to arrive earlier. If a threshold is not imposed then we will be categorising all lateness in the same way, which would prevent monitoring of what is a precursor to complete non-attendance, and would allow use of the L code (present) to be used in circumstances where the child may be arriving at school hours late. Setting a standard level also allows benchmarking across all schools, provides sound guidelines and boundaries of standards expected by pupils and parents and supports safeguarding if school knows to start "first day" absence at a specific time rather than waiting for several hours before checks are made. |

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| <b>Action</b>      | <b>S6</b> All schools will ensure that parents/carers have written notification every time that their child's absence is recorded as unauthorised.  |
| <b>Comment</b>     | We feel this to be unnecessary bureaucracy. We currently inform all parents by telephone as part of the call home that takes place to query the unknown absence of a child. This conversation is recorded (in writing) and a follow up letter therefore creates an additional layer of admin. Furthermore, the vast majority of pupils whose absence is recorded as unauthorised are known to the AWO and as such their parents receive letters from them.  |
| <b>LA response</b> | The audit report states that "Without documentary evidence at the School to confirm that parents have been made aware of an unauthorised absence, prosecution for non-attendance cannot take place." This does not apply to the documenting of first day response procedures. In order to support consistency in approach to prosecution schools need to provide documented evidence, of a quality that is acceptable to the Court, that parents have been informed each time an absence is recorded as unauthorised. Notification to parents could form part of the schools existing written correspondence to parents when ascertaining reason for absence (e.g. failure to provide a reason will result in the absence recorded as unauthorised) or alternatively when requesting a meeting with parents. Despite the possible involvement from the AWS, the Audit recommendation sets out what is expected of the school intervention prior to and during AWS involvement. As schools hold the legal responsibility to mark registers the informing of parents of the reason for unauthorising absence forms part of this responsibility and would be a useful addition to the paperwork both at the point of referral into AWS as well as during AWS intervention. |



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| <b>Action</b>      | <b>S7</b> All schools will ensure that all missing marks (“N” codes) are removed within 1 week and the absences categorised accurately. Where no reason for absence is received the O Code is to be used.   |
| <b>Comment</b>     | We would as a school find it difficult to carry out rigorous enquiries in one week. We initially contact parents by telephone when absences have not been explained. Following this a letter is issued to parents. We feel the timescale of one week is tight to send and receive information from parents. I appreciate that they should contact the school but would like additional time to ensure we have an accurate record of the reasons given for absence.  |
| <b>LA response</b> | Comment received is valid as action is ambiguous. To clarify:<br>Missing marks are voids where the school has not recorded whether a child is present or absent. This is a safeguarding issue and missing marks should be cleared on the day as it is a matter of fact whether a child is present. In schools where SIMS is not available in the classroom, paper registers should be uploaded onto SIMS and missing marks cleared in one week.<br>Use of the “N” code is to be used where a child is absent, but no reason for this absence has been established at the point of recording. If no reason is established after two weeks then it should be amended to Code “O” – Other Unauthorised Absence. Schools must accept responsibility for categorising their absences and be more rigorous in not accepting reasons for absences that they feel may not be genuine. |

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| <b>Action</b>      | <b>S10</b> All schools to record details of pupil circumstances that explain the use of Codes I, O, R, W, P and J using the commentary notes field on SIMS.  |
| <b>Comment</b>     | This would create a significant amount of unnecessary work e.g. we have a very rigorous database for recording information relating to work experience and as such, consider the requirement to transfer this information to SIMS to be ‘double handling’ and unnecessary bureaucracy.   |
| <b>LA response</b> | It is accepted that having to enter the same note for each day for each instance would be burdensome. It would be appropriate to only enter the note against the first day for that “block” of usage for each pupil, indicating that it also applies to any following consecutive days. Adding context, particularly to the use of I and O codes which can cover a very wide range of reasons allows the identification of patterns for individual pupils. |

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|----------------|--|
| <b>Action</b>  | <b>S14</b> All schools using of the “W” code for pupils on work experience must have the supporting detail recorded in the relevant notes field on SIMS e.g. placement information.  |
| <b>Comment</b> | This would create a significant amount of unnecessary work e.g. we have a very rigorous database for recording information relating to work experience and as such, consider the requirement to transfer this information to SIMS to be ‘double handling’ and unnecessary bureaucracy. |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>LA response</b> | Examination of the universal availability and use of the above referenced database needs to be established. If it fulfils the need to be able to identify the work placement status for any pupil on any day then it will be sufficient to meet the need of the audit recommendation. Where schools feel this detail is already recorded formal cross checking needs to be undertaken by the AWS as part of formal inspection of registers. The school will still be required to record the status as code “W” within SIMS. |
|--------------------|---|

#### Appendix 4: Formal Register Inspection Checklist

| School   | Date |
|--|------|
| <b>Classroom Registers</b>   |      |
| Has the register been taken for each session for every child in the class  |      |
| How many pupils are recorded as under 85% at the time of the inspection  |      |
| Is there evidence that absences are followed up e.g. telephone call, letter  |      |
| Does the school utilise the notes area on the SIMS system for recording reasons for absence e.g. illness or moving house |      |
| If a child's name has been removed from a register is the reason legitimate and recorded                                 |      |
| If not is the school aware of the CME procedures (safeguarding)  |      |
| Have the correct codes been used to categorise absence   |      |
| Are there any missing marks. Are they random or apply to specific classes or groups                                      |      |
| Is there evidence that registers have been altered or original marks changed   |      |
| Are there pupils arriving late. If so How many   |      |
| Are any late pupils arriving after the close of registration   |      |
| Does the school use the Study Leave code (extent)  |      |
| Is there evidence of using the B code (extent and reasons given)   |      |
| Are there pupils dually registered and are there checks made to record accurately  |      |
| Does the school follow guidance on approving and recording holiday absence   |      |
| Are there any extended holiday absences recorded   |      |
| What is the extent of absences due to exclusion  |      |
| Do pupils return as expected following a fixed term exclusion, if not what is recorded and how is it pursued             |      |
| Has the school been closed to pupils e.g. inclement weather  |      |
| Has the school used the Y code (outline)   |      |
| Are there any pupils of compulsory school age marked with an X   |      |
| Any further observations   |      |
| <b>Signed</b>  |      |
| <b>Print name</b>  |      |
| <b>Designation</b>   |      |

**\*\*THIS FORM IS FOR OFFICE STAFF TO COMPLETE\*\***