**RHONDDA CYNON TAF
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

ATTENDANCE AND WELLBEING SERVICE

GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOLS:

A TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOLS

SEPTEMBER 2014

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Acronyms

AIO	Attendance Intervention Officer
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ARP	Annual Report to Parents
ASO	Attendance Support Officer
AWO	Attendance and Wellbeing Officer
AWS	Attendance and Wellbeing Service
CME	Children Missing Education
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSCJES	Central South Consortium Joint Education Service
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School
FPN	Fixed Penalty Notice
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
LEA	Licensing Authority
NEET	Not in education employment or training
PSP	Pastoral Support Programme
RCT	Rhondda Cynon Taff
RCTCBC	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEEET	Supporting Engagement into Education, Employment and Training
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TSW	Transitional Support Worker
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WG	Welsh Government
YEPS	Youth Engagement and Participation Service
YPO	Youth Participation Officer
YRO	Youth Reengagement Officer

Introduction

The toolkit has now been reviewed and updated to reflect the most recent changes to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS), the introduction of new legislation and the past year's work with schools. It is now fit for purpose for September 2014 and will continue to be an essential resource for schools in its working relationship with the AWS.

Between 2011 and 2013, attendance in RCT primary schools improved at a higher rate than the Wales average, improving from 92.3% in 2011 to 93.4% in 2013. Attendance in secondary schools improved at a similar rate to the Wales average between 2011 and 2013, improving from 90.6% in 2011 to 91.9% in 2013.

ESTYN's monitoring visit in June 2014 successfully concluded their contact with the authority stating that

"Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is judged to have made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the inspection of March 2012. As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales considers that the authority is no longer in need of Estyn monitoring and is removing it from further follow-up activity" and

*"The authority has produced a useful strategy and **toolkit** for improving attendance, following consultation with headteachers and other stakeholders. Headteachers find the toolkit valuable and effective in outlining consistent procedures to help improve attendance"*

This is proven evidence that the arrangements now embedded into practice for AWS is having a positive impact for schools and the Local Authority and has given us the confidence to continue with our work in providing the most appropriate level of support to schools in RCT and maximising our resources for the benefit of all pupils across RCT.

The activities undertaken during 2013-14 have not only validated our progress but have also provided us with some key areas upon which to focus going forward for the coming years.

Any comments should be sent to:
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RCT Attendance Information

Over the past three academic years, both primary and secondary schools have made significant improvements in their attendance rates, with increases of 1.1% and 1.3% respectively.

The improvement across the primary sector has resulted in RCT rising from the 22nd local authority in Wales in 2010/11, to the 16th at the end of 2012/13. Unfortunately, the improvements gained across secondary schools have not had the same impact on the all Wales rankings (20th in 2010/11, yet a drop to 21st at the end of 2012/13).

Whilst final attendance figures for 2014 will not be confirmed until the Autumn term, local data indicates that attendance rates in both primary and secondary schools have continued to improve when compared with the same period last year. It is envisaged that the rate of improvement across RCT will be greater than that of other local authorities, and therefore, it is hoped that RCT will rise in the All Wales rankings.

To evidence the impact targeted interventions are having on specific vulnerable groups, the gap between the attendance of free school meals and non-free school meal pupils has been monitored. The measurements illustrate that the targeted support is delivering significant benefits to the most in-need pupils. The FSM/non-FSM gap has decreased by 0.8% in primary schools in the last three years, with a reduction of 1.1% in secondary schools during the same period.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Primary			
RCT	92.3%	93.1%	93.4%
FSM/non-FSM Gap	3.5%	3.1%	2.7%
All Wales	93.3%	93.8%	93.7%
All Wales Ranking of RCT	22nd	18th	16th
Secondary			
RCT	90.6%	90.6%	91.9%
FSM/non-FSM Gap	6.8%	6.4%	5.7%
All Wales	91.4%	92.2%	92.6%
All Wales Ranking of RCT	20th	21st	21st

Table 1: Summary of attendance data 2011-2013 (Source: Stats Wales Data Release – data includes special schools where relevant)

Progress has been made with some attendance issues but it remains evident that the most common themes associated with school absence in RCT continue to be the following and tackling them will be the focus for both schools and the local authority to prioritise going forward:

- Lateness/punctuality;

- Condoned absence;

- Holidays in term-time;

- Truancy;

- Persistent absence;

- Sickness/medical absence;

- Entrenched cases of absence/repeat referrals;

- In year transfers.

Central South Consortium Joint Education Service

Welsh Government provided a consortium based attendance grant which established the mechanisms for more effective communication with colleagues from Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. A Network Attendance Group was established to facilitate the coordination of the grant on a regional basis, enhancing the ability to share information on working practices and more especially more open dialogue regarding attendance data. A Consortium strategy was developed between all partners and mirrored that in existence across RCT. The objectives of the strategy were identified as:

- Strengthening the statutory duties of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service;

- Improving the collation, analysis, use and sharing of data;

- Improving the links with school improvement services;

- Raising the awareness of good school attendance both within the local authority and with wider/external partners.

Strong links have been with Welsh Government, with regular feedback and challenge being made to improve the current working practices as governed by The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 and the subsequent attendance codes. Despite the grant ceasing in the autumn 2014, it is envisaged that the Network Attendance Group will continue to convene to build upon the foundations that have been set over the past months.

Notable Changes Impacting on Attendance

Over the past twelve months, developments have occurred at both national and local levels that have/will impact on school attendance. The following are the most notable introductions that will influence attendance procedures:

Fixed Penalty Notices

In accordance with the Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, RCT will be introducing fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for regular non-attendance at school during 2014/15 academic year, with the local authority Code of Conduct officially adopted as of the 1st September 2014. The criteria for which the FPNs can be issued are:

- 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in the current term;

- 10 or more instances of arriving after the register closes (U code) in the current term;

- Parental non-engagement with the school and/or Attendance and Wellbeing Service relating to attendance matters;

- Truanting in a public place during school hours;

- Any number of unauthorised holiday absences during the current term.

In order for a school to be able to request for an FPN to be issued, the Attendance Policy, and any supporting documents, must be amended to reference the use of the scheme within the school. To assist, a template paragraph has been provided to the school to indicate the type of inclusion that should be made to the policy. This must be ratified and adopted by the Governing Body prior to an FPN being issued.

Further details regarding how a school can make a request for an FPN to be issued can be found in the local authority's Code of Conduct in A*ppendix 1*.

Youth Engagement and Participation Service

The Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS), formally Services for Young People, was established in April 2014 to support young people aged 11 – 25 years. As such, the YEPS is located within the wider service area Engagement and Participation with the AWS. This allows for clear working links between the two teams, with joint priorities including school attendance. The remit of the Youth Reengagement Officer (YRO) in each secondary school includes working with key stage 4 pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90 % (but above 86%) in the previous six week period. Referrals should be made in the same way as other attendance referrals (via the AWS referral form with supporting evidence of intervention sent to the generic AWS inbox), and upon

receipt will be allocated to the appropriate officer for the case, i.e. the YRO or AWO.

Attendance Support Officer/Attendance and Wellbeing Officer Roles

As a result of the likely impact on KS4 referrals due to the involvement of the YEPS officers, Attendance and Wellbeing Officers will be assigned referrals of year 5 and 6 primary pupils. This will assist with the transition period between primary and secondary schools, supporting pupils at a vulnerable point in their school career. Attendance Support Officers will retain the lead for the primary school and will continue to manage the initiatives, but cases of year 5 and 6 pupils will be handled by the Attendance and Wellbeing Officer for that area.

In-Year School Transfer Protocol

From September 2014, a new in-year transfer protocol will be piloted across all secondary schools in RCT for pupils requesting a mid-year move in years 9, 10 or 11. This will require parents having to request an 'Intention to Transfer' form from the current school stating their reasons for the move, including where it is due to a house move. The form will also seek the pupil's opinion and details of their current curriculum options. This must be completed and returned to the school, which in turn will initiate a meeting between a senior member of staff from the current school, prospective school and the parent(s), should they wish to attend. If the parent does not wish to be present, the meeting should continue in their absence, within 5 days of the form being submitted to the school. This will give the opportunity to discuss the pupil and their progress, and determine if their options will be affected should the transfer be completed. Only once the meeting has taken place, can the current headteacher sign the 'Intention to Transfer' form for submission to the School Admissions Team in the local authority.

Upon receipt of the 'Intention to Transfer' form, the School Admissions Team will release a formal In-Year Transfer form to the parent. In addition, a referral will be made to the Youth Engagement and Participation Service for the young person, to support them through the transfer. If the transfer is not as a direct result of a house move, a review will be initiated to gather all relevant information relating to that pupil from all local authority service areas. A panel will be held to discuss the situation and an action plan developed (if required) to support the transition of the pupil from one school to the other. The 15 day processing period will still apply once the In-Year Transfer form has been received by the School Admission Team.

More information can be found in Section 4, Point 9 of this toolkit.

Holidays in term time

As part of the fixed penalty notice consultation process, opinions were sought on replicating a zero tolerance approach to holidays in term time, like that in place in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and all ERW (South West and Mid Wales) Councils. The outcome of the consultation favoured a consistent approach across all schools, with a majority agreeing with a zero tolerance approach. Following this, a Cabinet

decision was taken to approve a zero tolerance approach with effect from the 1st September 2014.

With Cabinet approval for consistency across all schools, headteachers are being encouraged to adopt a zero tolerance to term time holidays from the 1st September 2014. Whilst the legislation under Section 7 (3 and 4) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 allows head teachers to "*grant leave of absence from school for the purposes of a family holiday for no more that 10 days in an academic year*", the local authority stance is one which will discourage holiday absence unless the pupil and family are exempt under one of the three "exceptional" circumstance criteria.   Those exemptions are:

- Families of serving armed forces personnel;

- Parent or child experiencing a life limiting illness;

- Families that have suffered an acute trauma.

In the event of holiday leave for a pupil being requested by a parent/carer, the school is asked to record the sessions as unauthorised absences in line with the Cabinet decision and then make a formal request for a fixed penalty notice to be issued.

Unlike other circumstances for a fixed penalty notice, a holiday absence will not be subject to a monitoring period (15 school days) for improvement to happen but a fixed penalty notice will be automatically issued on receipt of the school's request. Payment will, as with other circumstances, be £60 if paid within 28 days, £120 if paid within 42 days.

School attendance data will be monitored for the use of the holiday absence codes (H, F and G), so that the authority is in a position to ensure the consistent application of both the codes and the requests for fixed penalty notices.

In order for schools to request a fixed penalty notice, Governing Bodies are expected to amend and ratify their school attendance policies by the end of the autumn term 2014, in order to reflect the introduction this zero tolerance approach to holidays in term time. The Attendance and Wellbeing Service will accept requests to issue a fixed penalty notices for unauthorised holidays in term time from the 1st January 2015. It is recommended that all Link Governors for Attendance attend the training course offered by the Governor Support Service, details of which can be found in the Training Programme.

Further details can be found in Section 4, Point 3 of this toolkit.

Progress against the Attendance Strategy

The school attendance strategy, "Every Child, Every Day: RCT School Attendance Strategy 2011-2013", provided the framework under which the achievements of the past three years were delivered. Whilst developments occurred during that time, the structure remained consistent and supported the progress across RCT. Service improvements will continue to be made throughout the coming years, but the outcomes of the last three years have evidenced that the general priorities are key to further improvement and therefore, will remain the same for the new attendance strategy.

Raising Public Awareness

Ensuring that the profile of attendance is promoted across communities the AWS marketing campaigns, initiatives and events will continue to be integral element of the work of the AWS. Significant inroads have been made in consolidating school attendance as a priority for all services working with children, young people and families and engaging local businesses to support improvements in attendance as a community issue. Many local businesses currently support schools to improve attendance with a range of donations and incentives for pupils and their families and we hope to encourage more support from both commercial enterprises and other corporate council departments.

Within primary schools, 'Super Attender' has become a well known super hero brand to primary pupils and has been used in posters, workbooks, merchandise and achievement trophies in helping to maintain the momentum of the annual Super Attender challenge (recognition for 98%). The Super Attender theme tune was launched in the summer of 2014 and is being promoted on YouTube and available for download on iTunes. To build on this popular concept a community based Super Attender Supporters campaign is being developed.

The unprecedented success of the 'Attend and Achieve' award event in 2014 has made the service more determined to make it an annual celebration to applaud the achievements of secondary school pupils who, despite facing personal or family difficulties show huge resilience and fortitude in maintaining or improve their school attendance. Each secondary school is asked to nominate a pupil who they feel is deserving of this accolade and be presented with a gift from the education department. It is the intention to roll out these awards to include nominations from special schools and the pupil referral units in future years.

Three annual public campaigns focus on the areas identified as causing particular concern i.e. punctuality, absence to go Christmas shopping and holidays in term time. Bus advertising and school banners have successfully raised community awareness and a number of press releases were used to reinforce the messages and highlight the work of the AWS. This work will continue and be supported by a strong emphasis on the service's use of legal proceedings to protect a pupil's right to their education and tackle the significant level of parentally condoned absence in RCT.

Consistent Service Delivery

Referrals are predominantly generated by schools for the following reasons:

- A pupil's attendance has fallen to 86% or below over a six week period and school based interventions have failed to resolve the problems;

- A pupil presents with well being concerns regardless of attendance.

Once a referral is accepted the case will remain open to an AWO for a minimum of twelve weeks during which an assessment of need and action plan to resolve the problem is agreed with parents. Part of and during the assessment process a judgement will be made on whether the case should be referred to another service, supported by a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach or progress to statutory proceedings. An allocated case will remain open until the attendance has improved to over 86% and the situations has remained stable for a reasonable period of time or has been through the statutory process

Closing an Attendance Case has been a controversial topic. Effective communication networks with school staff and sharing information on the progress of open cases is key to a successful and supportive professional relationship and AWOs are encouraged to have these discussions with school staff and hopefully reach agreement on how a case is progressed. Having formal referral processes has meant that AWOs manage cases in a more structured and time focussed way which has resolved the unnecessary "drift" of individual cases which never seem to improve. It also allows for much easier monitoring of the demand on the service/individual AWO and therefore the flexibility to shift resources when needed. One of the key priorities for 2014-15 is to establish an appropriate and tangible communication method between AWS and the school based Attendance Lead/Headteacher.

Prosecutions of parents are part of planned intervention in cases where it is identified as an appropriate attempt to protect a child's right to education and a way of compelling parents to co-operate with the AWS and take responsibility for their child(ren)'s attendance. A very small number of cases are returned to the court arena for repeated prosecution because of persistent parental disengagement and apathy. To address this concern, the service has re-instated the use of the aggravated offence legislation to bring these parents into a potentially more serious sentencing arena (under section 444 1a of the regulations).

Data

A priority for the AWS is to build on the All Wales Analysis Framework and continue developing our work with attendance data, in its collection and the systems to manage and use it to inform service improvement. One key task is to embed the advice and guidance element of service provision in line with schools' performance data thereby allowing us to tailor support appropriately on a needs basis.

Half termly data reports are compiled for each school cluster detailing the code usage across each of the six half terms, and uploaded to Moodle within the Headteacher section. The report also highlights a comparison with the same period the previous year. Trends can be determined within each cluster and will be used to inform the level and type of support each locality needs to continue improving its attendance rates. Analysis will allow for exception reports to be generated on schools that are underperforming to target or where anomalies are present in code usage.

Data Response Visits will be arranged with those schools with coding and/or process anomalies, identified through the half termly reports and registration compliance checks, as a means of formally recording this advice and guidance to schools, determine actions to address the anomalies and evidence the service provided and improvements achieved. Copies of discussions held during Data Response Visits will be given to schools as supporting evidence for Challenge Advisors and/or ESTYN inspections.

Attendance Target Setting was undertaken for all RCT schools in a revised format for academic year 2013/14. A set of rules were applied to each school, and supplemented by local knowledge to determine the most suitable target for each setting. This approach allowed for an individually assigned target that was appropriate to the school and its circumstances. Every school's target is set as a minimum to the median for their FSM group and accounting for the following factors:

- School inspection date and category;
- Current performance against existing 3 year targets set December 2012;
- Comparison of existing performance to median;
- FSM quartiles;
- Percentage of pupils with attendance rates below 86% (in order to assess level of AWS intervention);
- School size;
- Known exceptional factors that impeded last years performance;
- Level of support available from AWS.

A similar formula for the calculation of future years will be used, with allowance for changes in national policy, as well as local developments.

Schools are advised of their new targets by autumn half term, following the verification of the previous year's full data set.

Registration compliance checks across schools continue to be conducted to ensure the accurate use of attendance codes. Where anomalies are identified, the AWS will contact the school to determine the reason for the usage and if it is incorrect, actions will be jointly agreed to rectify the error.

Internal Audit investigations are commissioned as a means of inspecting code usage across all of the secondary schools and the outcomes from those arranged during 2013-14 have demonstrated that whilst the appropriate systems and procedures for effective registration practices are in place, more guidance for the accuracy of coding is needed to comply with legal requirements. To continue with this work it has been agreed that Internal Audit will include a registration compliance test in all school reviews in the future.

Statutory Register Inspections in both primary and secondary schools are operated remotely using a standardised template and in the event that there are anomalies or queries then the school will be contacted. Register compliance checks are done randomly which makes it imperative that all schools maintain their registers on a weekly basis so that the information is accurate and up to date. To support this further, the Referral and Coding Officer, based within the AWS, will conduct site visits (pre-arranged with schools) to undertake registration practice checks as a means of quality assuring their registration processes. This will include the review of the use of the SIMS notes fields and the retention of supplementary evidence such as holiday request forms, medical appointment cards etc.

Strategic Support for Schools

A Secondary Headteachers' Steering Group has been established with a select number of headteacher to assist with the development of local authority service improvements in relation to attendance. During 2013/14, the group has contributed to the identification of attendance leads across all secondary schools as the main point of contact for attendance matters; changes to the In-Year Transfer Protocol for secondary pupils; and, the revision of the data packs and their dissemination for more effective use of attendance data. This group will continue to convene, with the agenda focused on the current priorities for attendance.

Secondary School Attendance Leads have been identified in each of the secondary schools and now act as the main point of contact for all attendance matters, developing a more effective communication structure. These senior school staff have been invited to participate in a professional learning community for attendance and behaviour matters, lead by the Head of Achievement for Secondary Schools. In addition to this, a sample of Attendance Leads were nominated to form a small working group to work closely with the AWS manager to assist in informing service developments, contribute to policy and document production and advise on the creation of a training induction programme for attendance staff in schools.

Challenge advisors will also be notified on the revised targets during the first half of the Autumn Term and have the opportunity to discuss them with the AWS if they feel that they may not be appropriate or there are known factors that may mitigate them being achieved. The Attendance Self Evaluation Audit is being progressively used by Challenge Advisors in their lines of enquiry with schools.

Section 1: Responding to Attendance Issues

This section details the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and partners involved in supporting attendance. It also details the referral criteria into the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS) and the data collection and monitoring requirements.

1. <u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>

Ensuring regular school attendance is a demanding area of work that depends on establishing and utilising close working relationships between parents, pupils, schools, the AWS and other professionals working with children and young people in social, educational and health care settings.

A key element of any successful working relationship is a clear understanding of each person's role and responsibilities, and as such this section sets out to clarify the roles and responsibilities for those people engaged with tackling attendance issues.

1.1.The Parent

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent is responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by elective home education (the parent can choose to provide education for their child).

A pupil's punctuality is also a legal requirement and parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late (after the close of the classroom register) can also face legal proceedings. There are naturally situations at home that may make it difficult for a pupil to arrive on time and as such due consideration is given to any help or assistance a family may be given in these circumstances by the AWS (see section 1.4 – The Attendance Wellbeing Service).

1.2 The School

Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day; at the **start** of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important in order to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers. Detailed guidance on attendance codes can be found at the following link

http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/100902guidancecodesen.pdf

The LA and School agreement states that it is the responsibility of schools to:

- Ensure attendance data is entered on the register within 5 school days;

- Work with the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate to discuss suitably challenging targets for attendance informed by current attendance and benchmarking data;

- Agree and provide electronically to the Council/Joint Education Service 3 year rolling targets for school attendance on an annual basis;

- Monitor, discuss and analyse attendance data to support targeted interventions to raise attendance in the school.

The school has the responsibility to monitor individual attendance rates weekly and use their own intervention methods to tackle individual pupil attendance issues where the pupil's attendance rate is 86% and above. A referral to the AWS is required from the school when an individual's attendance falls to 85% or below over a six week period and there is no exceptional reason for this. However the school can refer a pupil to the AWS should there be concerns for the individual's wellbeing with attendance above 85%. The AWS must receive a completed referral form before the service can work with an individual.

The process has been amended for *key stage 4 pupils*, with the threshold for an attendance referral being raised to 90% for such pupils. Schools are expected to follow the usual attendance referral procedure, by completing the form available on SIMS, including details for all prior intervention undertaken by the school to reengage the pupil.

Form tutors must ensure that their registers are completed fully and accurately during every registration session. Failure to do so is not only in contravention of the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, but also could have significant safeguarding implications and jeopardise any future prosecution process. SIMS notes fields should be used to ensure that the additional details relating to the absence are captured and retained on file.

Subject tutors must ensure that lessons registers are completed fully and accurately during the lesson itself.

In order to *request an FPN* be issued to a parent/carer, a school must monitor the individual attendance patterns of their pupils. If trends are identified that match the criteria stated in the local authority's Code of Conduct, a school has the ability to make a formal request to the AWS to issue an FPN (see *appendix 1* for Code of Conduct).

1.3 Governor Support Service

The Governor Support Service will:

- organise training for Governors which ensures that they are made aware of the responsibilities of schools for securing regular attendance; the AWS Manager will take the lead in this training;

- promote Good Practice and appoint a Link Governor for attendance;

- advise that the Link Governor liaises with school staff, and if necessary, the AWS to maintain procedures to effect acceptable levels of pupils attendance;

- include details, of the actual absence rates of the relevant year, all absence targets and a statement setting out the extent to which the actual absence rate met the final target set for the same year, in the Annual Report to Parents (ARP);

- have in place an Attendance policy and review annually to account for developments in attendance that have taken place that will impact upon school procedures e.g. fixed penalty notices, holidays in term time, AWS service changes etc. This policy should set out the roles/responsibilities of the school staff (in dealing with this matter), reflect LA's attendance strategy and be endorsed by the full governing body and pupils should be consulted on the content.

In return, the AWS can provide the School Governor's with an update on their data and AWS activity if requested. Additional training can also be provided to Governing Body members if deemed necessary.

1.4 The Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS)

The principal function of the AWS is to improve attendance in all schools and alternative education provisions across the LA.

The service provides support to schools, pupils and their families to ensure regular attendance and address any difficulties relating to absenteeism. AWS works collaboratively with a range of support services and agencies and provides an essential link between home and school to ensure that pupils benefit from the educational opportunities available to them.

The service acts on behalf of the authority in its statutory enforcement capacity and is responsible for a number of related duties that include:

- the regulating and issuing of child employment and performance licenses for school age children and young people, and their chaperones;

- support and advice in the process and arrangement of alternative provision for individual pupils who cannot or who are unable to attend a mainstream school;

- the recognition and referral response to matters relating to safeguarding and child protection;

- the investigate, locate and track children who are referred as " Children Missing from Education";

- to oversee the education needs of vulnerable pupils e.g. Gypsy Traveller families;

- to work in partnership with South Wales Police in the arrangement and coordination of formal truancy operations in accordance with Crime and Disorder legislation.

In April 2013, the service was restructured to support the developments in the role of the team and wider service area. With a sharper focus on data and quality assurance of the service's processes, a Referral and Coding Officer post was created on a temporary basis to oversee these priority areas. Since then, further amendments have been made to the Team Leader roles to ensure they are fit for purpose for the objectives of the service. The AWS structure can be found in *Appendix 2.*

The main role of the AWS, apart from supporting the Authority in improving school attendance and attainment, is to:

- contribute to the LA and school's drive for school effectiveness;

- work in partnership with schools, pupils, parents and communities to ensure educational entitlement and regular attendance;

- link with a network of agencies providing education, health and social services to ensure and promote the wellbeing of pupils;

- initiating statutory proceedings on behalf of the LA.

Specific Role of the AWS Manager

The AWS Manager leads, manages and directs a high quality AWS that supports the corporate aims and values of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC), contributes to school improvement through partnership working with schools and other key agencies in ensuring regular pupil attendance. Their role incorporates direct line management of the Team Leaders, Referral and Coding Officer, Attendance Intervention Officers and the Administration Officers. Specific responsibilities include the strategic leadership of the service, acting in a advocacy role between school and Welsh Government for national policy changes and improvements, provide project and performance data management, and the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of staff.

Specific Role of the AWS Team Leader

The AWS Team Leader is responsible for leading the AWS delivery on a locality basis, providing line management of all operational customer-facing staff (Attendance and Wellbeing Officers and Attendance Support Officers). They

also manage, develop and advise on a specialist area of work across RCT as a whole. These include:

- Safeguarding and Child Licensing Team Leader;

- Children Missing Education and Wellbeing Team Leader;

- Prosecution Team Leader.

It is their duty to oversee the collation and analysis of the data required to ensure operational efficiency, challenging schools on their internal processes if necessary and supporting them to introduce new initiatives within the school. Team Leaders will also use this information to inform service delivery in line with performance management indicators. Additionally they will take on AWO duties as required, in line with the needs of the service.

Specific Role of the Referral and Coding Officer (RCO)

The permanent Referral and Coding Officer post was established in 2013 top ensure consistent and professional referral management, reducing the lead time of referral assessments and offer a central point of contact for advice on both referral appropriateness and coding queries. The RCO provides a quality assurance mechanism for referrals into the service as well as ensuring strict adherence to the AWS case progression timeframes. Managing theprocess of formal register inspections, this post provides challenge and support to schools on all aspects of registration practices and coding.

With the introduction of the YEP service, the RCO will also manage the attendance referrals of KS4 pupils between 86-90% attendance for allocation to the Youth Reengagement Officers.

Specific Role of the Attendance and Wellbeing Officer (AWO)

The AWO has responsibility for supporting attendance across RCT. Whilst an AWO will be assigned as a lead officer for a secondary school, the allocation of cases will be such that allows for flexibility of movement of staff across schools, and therefore, may result in several officers managing cases within the same school. From September 2014, AWOs will continue to support all statutory secondary pupils, they will also be allocated any referrals that are received for year 5 and 6 pupils to support the transition phase between primary and secondary schools. To provide the capacity for this, key stage 4 pupils with attendance between 86 and 90% can be referred into the service to receive support from the YEPS' Youth Reengagement Officer, which are based in secondary schools. It is envisaged that the intervention provided by these officers will reduce the number of pupils falling below the 86% threshold and therefore being assigned to an AWO.

The AWO supports young people and their families by advising and making appropriate referrals to outside agencies to overcome any difficulties/ barriers preventing their access to education. They also support the school by advising

on policies and good practice around attendance and wellbeing concerns. The AWO also has the responsibility to ensure that statutory sanctions are in place and applied consistently.

Specific Role of the Attendance Support Officer (ASO)

Externally-funded ASOs will continue to work with primary pupils and their families up to year 4, and deliver AWS initiatives within schools and the wider community as requested. The posts are currently funded until March 2015, with the expectation of being extended for a further 12 months.

They will assist primary schools to address issues relating to non-attendance which adversely effect pupils' ability to maximise the educational opportunities available to them.

Specific Role of the Attendance Intervention Officer (AIO)

Similarly to the ASO, the AIO is a temporary post that is currently funded until March 2015. They will be managed by the AWS Manager and will provide the planning, coordination and delivery of a range of AWS initiatives aimed at improving school attendance in RCT.

Specific Role of the Administrative Officer

The Administrative Officer offers clerical support and specialised system support to the service along with receiving and assessing referrals from schools. They are also the point of contact for families, providing them with general information. It is also their duty to assist Team Managers in data collection and analysis.

1.5 Supporting Engagement into Education, Employment and Training Team

Under the wider service area of Engagement and Participation, the work of the Supporting Engagement into Education, Employment and Training (SEEET) Coordinator and three Post 16 Transitional Support Workers (TSWs) has widened the remit of the service area to work with young people up to the age of 25. The staff work closely with the AWS and Careers Wales to ensure the successful transition of young people who are at risk of disengaging from year 11 to post 16 education, employment and training.

1.6 Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS)

There have been many changes made to the way youth services is being offered in RCT, with one of the most significant being staff and provision based on secondary school sites. The ethos is to complement school priorities by aligning the delivery of the service for improved learner engagement, behaviour and school attendance, reducing exclusion rates and providing additional post 16 transition support.

Each secondary school has two new members of staff, a Youth Participation Officer and Youth Reengagement Officer. These posts are full time (37 hours, 52 weeks), and are be required to work out of school hours as part of this contract. Whilst the Youth Participation Officer (YPO) has responsibility for the OSHL activities, including holiday and community provision, the Youth Reengagement Officer (YRO) will focus on providing specific support for individuals and groups, in terms of vulnerable groups, in-year transfer support and accreditation opportunities. In addition to this, the role has a school attendance focus to ensure pupils at risk of disengaging are supported to overcome their barriers that are resulting in rising school absence levels.

Initially, the Youth Reengagement Officers will focus on key stage 4 pupils whose current attendance is between 90 – 86%, and therefore, not currently open to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service. Referrals will still have to be made by school to the YRO via the current attendance referral process, including details of school's involvement prior to the request. The YRO and AWO will be working closely together and should the attendance for a pupil drop below 86% when open to a YRO, a subsequent internal referral will be made to the AWS for the case to be transferred to an AWO.

The Youth Engagement and Participation Service will provide a wide range of support and provision for young people aged 11 – 25 years, targeted at those most vulnerable and in need. Whilst the officers will be based on school site, they will be line managed by the Local Authority and expected to provide wider community provision.

1.7 The Local Authority (LA)

Under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities (LA) have a duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Further information can be found in Section 4 of the Welsh Government's (WG) 'Inclusion and Pupil Support' guidance document

http://wales.gov.uk/dcells/publications/publications/circularsindex/2006/inclusionandpupilsupport/inclusionpupilsupport-e.pdf?lang=en.

Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that Local Authorities must make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a 'suitable education'.

It is the duty of the LA to ensure that parents and schools carry out their responsibilities and this duty is devolved to the AWS.

1.8 School Improvement Service

The Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (CSCJES) School Improvement Strategy, Achieving Excellence Together, sets high levels of ambition and explains how it will work with pupils, parents, schools, Local

Authorities and wider partners to achieve the improvements which are needed if children and young people are to succeed in the region.

Improving school attendance was identified as one of the key priority areas for the Consortium and whilst it is managed under the auspice of 'wellbeing', tackling absenteeism is an action area in its own right. A strategic network group was established in 2013, with representatives from each of the five Local Authorities' Education Welfare Services. Grant funding from Welsh Government has provided the Consortium with the opportunity to introduce a regional approach to improving school attendance.

A Consortium School Attendance Strategy has been developed in collaboration with each Local Authority partner which sets out the commitment to improving school attendance by 2016, in line with the wider Consortium Strategy. The document outlines the role of the School Improvement Service in raising school attendance levels, alongside schools and the Local Authorities.

The key principles of the Consortium strategy align with the existing identified areas for investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf, complementing the positive outcomes of the AWS to date and challenging both the service and partners to continue to achieve results over the coming years. These principles will therefore remain as the pillars of the RCT strategy, whilst allowing for local political and customer-need fluctuations.

To achieve the Consortium strategy and aid the success of this plan, the CSC will:

- Ensure that attendance is a standing item on school improvement meeting agendas;

- Monitor each school's whole-school strategic approach;

- Use code level data to track attendance progress and challenge schools on their levels and code usage, where applicable;

- Undertake an attendance audit by using the approved toolkit and ensure the outcomes are shared with the AWS;

- Develop the expertise of school staff to meet the demands of raising school attendance targets;

- Facilitate the sharing of good practice using the Portal as the means of disseminating the information.

1.9 The Police

The Police take a fundamental role in Truancy Sweep initiatives. The AIOs should discuss with the police the objectives and parameters of the truancy initiative and agree operational guidelines for all concerned.

Police officers should be made aware of categories of children who may have a justifiable cause to be out and about during school hours, especially home-educated children and excluded pupils. The police should also be made aware of other relevant information such as school hours, school holidays, training days, and whether the area is frequented by children from other areas with different school holidays.

The police should be given names and known movement patterns of children known to be persistent non-attendees and, where appropriate their names.

It is recommended in the 'All Wales Attendance Framework' that the police officers operating that power approach young people do so in uniform (due to child protection concerns) and where practicable are accompanied by an education representative such as an AWO, who will be able to check the school status of the young person concerned.

Where appropriate the British Transport Police are brought into discussions in respect of problems, involving pupils congregating on the rail network.

During Truancy Sweeps there may be occasional cases in which suspected truants refuse to comply. In such cases, if the police officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child or young person is absent from school without authority , the power under section 16 and section 8 will enable the officer to use such reasonable force as is necessary in the circumstances. Similarly, once the child is returned to the Designated Central Location or School where the suspected truants refuse to comply, the police officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child or young person is absent from school without authority, the power under section 117 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 enables as officer to use such reasonable force as is necessary in the circumstances.

As part of the local authority's Code of Conduct for tackling non-attendance at school, Police are able to request an FPN be issued to a pupil's family if they are found in a public place during school hours (truanting).

2. <u>Referral Criteria</u>

Please note: the referral form has been amended and has replaced the original on the SIMS system.

As previously outlined, referral into the AWS should only be made where a pupil's attendance falls to 85% or below over a six week period, unless they are a key stage 4 pupil, where a referral can be made once attendance has dropped below 90% during the monitoring period.

It is essential that the school uses its own intervention methods (e.g. Pastoral Support programmes) to tackle individual pupil attendance issues prior to a referral being made. This includes formal contact and communication with parents regarding attendance related concerns. Evidence of such interventions will be required as part of the referral information, as will information on parental engagement.

Template letters to parents have been uploaded onto SIMS and it is at the schools discretion when and to whom these letters are sent, however evidence that they have been sent is required in order to successfully refer pupils with below 85% (or 90% for KS4 pupil) attendance to the AWS. Schools may choose to employ a blanket approach to sending initial letters expressing concern about a pupil's attendance level i.e. when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% over a six week period. However, schools are advised to look at cases on an individual basis and in circumstances where the school know the situation surrounding an absence to be genuine and exceptional, e.g. long term illness, bereavement, operation, there is no need for these letters to be sent or indeed a referral to the AWS.

The 'Wellbeing' aspect of the 'Attendance and Wellbeing Service' refers to any Wellbeing issue that can be **attributed** or **linked** to **a pupil's attendance**. It is important that where there are safeguarding concerns for pupils, referral should be made immediately to Children's Services in line with the RCT Local Safeguarding Board procedures.

The referral process will not automatically 'reset' in line with the academic year. Once referrals are accepted the AWS the cases will remain open until the AWS intervention is concluded, irrelevant of the time of year. Therefore, there is no need for schools to re-refer cases already open to the AWS at the start of the Autumn Term.

The referral form has been amended for academic year 2014/15 and has replaced the original form on the SIMS system. A copy of this can be found in *Appendix 3*. In addition, an exemplar document has been included outlining the level of detail required in certain sections of the referral form, which can be found in *Appendix 4*.

<u>Please note that schools are required to email completed referral forms to the central AWS email account (aws@rctcbc.gov.uk) along with an up to date registration certificate of the child being referred.</u>

<u>AWS staff are not responsible for picking up referrals from school SIMS systems.</u>

3. Data codes and requirements

The school must maintain an accurate register, in order to support any statutory interventions that may be required to be undertaken by the AWS.

Prosecution for non attendance can only take place if absence is recorded as unauthorised. Where schools have not received a reason for a pupil's absence, or have reason to question the reason provided by parents the LA will support schools to unauthorise absence in order to assist the AWS in discharging its statutory duties. It is the duty of schools to ensure that parents are aware when absences have been recorded as unauthorised and the reason for doing so. This must be presented in writing although it does not have to be in a letter (postal service). An email and/or text message to a parent informing them of the specific period of the absence that has been unauthorised will suffice as long as evidence of this communication (i.e. copy of the email/text message with the date and time it was sent) is retained on pupil file or school records.

The WG has published a reference document – 'Guidance on School Attendance Codes' – which can be of use when it comes to selecting the correct attendance code. It can be accessed by link below:

http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/100902guidancecodesen.pdf

4. Types of Attendance Issues

This section aims to provide information and clarity for schools when it comes to choosing how to categorise and register instances of individual pupil absence. It defines and provides information on the most commonly occurring attendance issues.

The below information is taken from WG guidance.

4.1 Lateness / Punctuality

Schools should be alert to patterns of lateness as it could later provide the grounds for prosecution.

There are two categories of lateness:

Late before close of the register (L code)

Pupils arriving after the beginning of the session but before the close of the register are categorised as 'Late'. In this circumstance, pupils would still be legally considered present upon their arrival.

Late after close of register (U code)

Pupils fall into this category when they arrive after the close of registration with no relevant reason to code it otherwise (e.g. a doctor or dentist appointment).

WG guidelines and the local authority internal audit report recommendations state that the register closes **30 minutes** after the beginning of the session.

It is important that in this situation, the register is amended from showing the pupil as having an unauthorised absence to being late for the sake of emergencies, such as fire.

The time the pupil arrives at school should be noted in the SIMS notes field for that session where an L or U code has been used.

4.2 Truancy

Truancy is an intentional unauthorised absence from compulsory schooling and is usually child-initiated – therefore, it does not refer to absence where the parent has contacted the school to excuse or explain reasons for the absence.

There are two kinds of truancy:

Full-scale truancy

Full-scale truancy occurs where the pupil does not turn up for school at all.

Post-registration truancy

This occurs where the pupil attends school to get their mark during registration period but then misses subsequent sessions.

4.3 Holidays in Term Time

Parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw pupils from school during term time for a family holiday, but must make a formal request to their child's school for a leave of absence.

Whilst the legislation under Section 7 (3 and 4) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 allows head teachers to "*grant leave of absence from school for the purposes of a family holiday for no more that 10 days in an academic year*", the local authority has adopted a zero tolerance approach to the authoirsation of holidays in term time. It is hoped that this will discourage holiday requests and in turn reduce the number of absences.

There are, however, reasons that I school may be inclined to authorise such a request due to the pupil and family being exempt under one of the following three "exceptional" circumstance criteria:

- Families of serving armed forces personnel;

- Parent or child experiencing a life limiting illness;

- Families that have suffered an acute trauma.

In the event of holiday leave for a pupil being requested by a parent/carer, the school is asked to record the sessions as unauthorised absences in line with the Cabinet decision and then make a formal request for a fixed penalty notice to be issued. This process is outlined in more detail in the local authority's Code of Conduct.

4.4 Persistent Absence

As the name suggests, persistent absence is when a pupil has frequent absences over a prolonged period of time.

This may be authorised absence, unauthorised absence or a combination of both.

It is important that schools are alert to persistent absence, irrespective of whether or not it has been authorised. For example, a pupil may be reported as being repeatedly ill, which would be registered as an authorised absence; however, it is the responsibility of the school to monitor this and where appropriate, challenge it.

Prosecution for non attendance can only take place if absence is recorded as unauthorised. Where schools have not received a reason for a pupil's absence, or have reason to question the reason provided by parents the LA will support schools to unauthorise absence in order to assist the AWS in discharging its statutory duties.

It is the duty of schools to ensure that parents are aware when absences have been recorded as unauthorised and the reason for doing so, via written communication (see Section One, point 3 for further details).

4.5 Sickness Absence

A sickness or medical related absence occurs when a child does not attend school because through illness. If reported by the parent/carer in the appropriate way, it will be recorded as an authorised absence in the first instance.

Pupils are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so, whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illness.

However, they should not be kept away when they are well enough to go to lessons. The AWS have produced a Consortium-wide health leaflet which outlines the NHS' recommended time a pupil should be away for school for the most common illnesses. These will be available in schools from September 2014.

It is perfectly reasonable for a school to ask the parent/carer about the nature of illness, expected duration of absence and to make arrangements with them to call the school again if the situation changes.

Schools are well within their right to challenge a parent or carers position with regard to medical absence as there are occasions when parents report parentally condoned absence to the school as medical absence.

Schools should ask the parent to substantiate the illness by asking to see additional evidence such as an appointment card, medical certificate, medication packet etc. and keep a photocopy on record.

4.6 Regular/Pattern Absence

Pattern absences are absences that can be linked by some common feature – for example, absence every Thursday, absence on a Friday afternoon or absence every time that the pupil has a Maths lesson.

It is fundamental that schools closely monitor absences to allow for early identification of any patterns, therefore ensuring that the underlying causes of absence are addressed and hopefully preventing the attendance problem becoming more extreme.

Monitoring attendance patterns and trends is especially important in addressing the needs of specific groups, such as Traveller and Gypsy children, LAC, Young Carers, as it allows the school to target its efforts.

4.7 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval for an absence, whether in advance or, where a satisfactory explanation has been provided, in lieu.

Examples of authorised absences include public performance and employment (licensed under regulations), days set aside for religious observance and medical/dental appointments.

Only schools, and not parents, can authorise an absence. Schools must carefully consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable (and also take into account the pupil's individual situation and attendance record) before authorising.

4.8 Unauthorised Absence

Any absence that has not been authorised by the school should be recorded as an unauthorised absence. There are three main situations in which an unauthorised absence should be registered, which are set out below:

Late after close of register

Please see Section 6a for more details.

Satisfactory explanation not provided

If school staff have reason to doubt that an explanation offered by a parent/carer about an absence is genuine, the absence should be treated as unauthorised. All absences should be treated as unauthorised until schools have agreed that a satisfactory explanation has been given, which should be within one day of the absence occurring.

Any investigation into the validity of an explanation should be pursued sensitively. However, where there is a concern that unauthorised absences are parentally-condoned, schools have a responsibility to address the issue at the earliest instance, to prevent the problem worsening. Schools should refer to their in-house attendance support programmes (e.g. Pastoral Team).

Should the individual pupil attendance fall below 86% (90% if KS4) or if there is a Wellbeing concern, the case should be referred into the AWS.

WG guidance suggests that schools should keep the notes for up to three years, which will be monitored as part of the onsite registration practice visits conducted by either Internal Audit or the Referral and Coding Officer.

No explanation provided

Parents/carers should provide an explanation for pupil absence within one day of the absence occurring.

If no explanation is forthcoming, First Day Response procedures should be followed (see Section 9.3) and the absence should be recorded as an N code whilst awaiting a satisfactory reason to be provided upon parental contact. If an appropriate reason has not been received within 2 weeks of the absence, the N code should be substituted for an O code and the parent informed in writing.

Schools should have a consistent and robust system in place, known to parents, of how to report pupil absence.

It is important, however, for schools to be aware that some parents/carers may face barriers when it comes to reporting absence. For example, some parents whose first language is not English or who have a disability may have difficulties in providing notes or using the telephone. It is recommended that schools agree alternative reporting methods with these parents, such as through a neighbour, community worker or an elder sibling.

4.9 In Year Transfers

In-year transfers can cause a significant level of disruption for a pupil, often resulting in further disengagement from education and learning. In the instances where the transfer is necessary due to a house move, the integration is challenging due to both school and personal life circumstances changing. Therefore, the pupil will require additional support from the school to ensure they are fully integrated into the new school as quickly as possible.

On occasion, a parent may request an in-year transfer whilst continuing to reside at the same home address. In this case, it is necessary for the school and any local authority services involved with the child or family to ascertain the reason for the desire to change schools to offer support and guidance in formalising that decision.

With the introduction of the pilot scheme for in-year transfers of pupils in years 9, 10 and 11, parents are required to complete an 'Intention to Transfer' form prior to from the current school stating their reasons for the move, including where it is due to a house move. The form will also seek the pupil's opinion and details of their current curriculum options. This must be completed and returned to the school, which in turn will initiate a meeting between a senior member of staff from the current school, prospective school and the parent(s), should they wish to attend. If the parent does not wish to be present, the meeting should continue in their absence, within 5 days of the form being submitted to the school. This will give the opportunity to discuss the pupil and their progress, and determine if their options will be affected should the transfer be completed. Only once the meeting has taken place, can the current headteacher sign the 'Intention to Transfer' form for submission to the School Admissions Team in the local authority.

Upon receipt of the 'Intention to Transfer' form, the local authority has to provide the parent with the formal Admissions Form, and process it with 15 days of receiving it. The new protocol will not stop a parent from making a transfer request, but it is hoped that it is assist in supporting parents to consider the implications of such a move prior to requesting it. In addition, the meetings that will be held between the two schools will improve the information sharing process and ensure that the receiving school is fully aware of the pupil, their options and any additional support they may require.

The flowchart and copy of the 'Intention to Transfer' form can be found in *Appendices 5 and 6* respectively.

5. Vulnerable Groups

There are certain groups of pupils that may be particularly vulnerable to poor school attendance. Some of these include Young Offenders, Young Carers, LAC, Gypsy and Traveller Children, children on the Child Protection Register, children affected by domestic violence and teenage mothers/teenagers that are pregnant. This list is, of course, not exhaustive and has just been provided for exemplification purposes.

While achieving an improved level of school attendance across RCT is important, this must not be striven for at the expense of the needs and wellbeing of particularly vulnerable groups. It is absolutely essential that when poor attendance occurs, schools consider each pupil's situation on its individual merit. Failure to do so may result in an exacerbation of the stress, flux and pressure that may have led to absence in the first place, therefore leading to further, deeper rooted attendance issues.

For example, a pupil who is the main carer at home may find it difficult to keep up with their homework. This may lead to them not attending school because they are afraid of sanctions such as after school detention which would directly impact on their ability to perform their caring responsibilities at home. This may then lead to them skipping lessons to avoid sanctions This is just one example of why vulnerable pupils need to have their situation considered on an individual basis and why it is important that their wider needs are identified and met.

The AWS will work hard to provide support to vulnerable groups and will actively seek out and refer pupils to organisations that are able to provide specialist support.

In addition, schools should closely monitor the attendance patterns of these groups, providing them with the information required to allow them to target their efforts.

It is fundamental that all agencies involved with vulnerable pupils work closely and share information, in so doing giving the pupil the best possible chance of maintaining their school attendance. **In order to ensure the AWS provides an informed response to the absence of vulnerable pupils, schools are requested to inform their Attendance and Wellbeing Officer on the fist day of absence of a pupil known to be on the Child Protection Register.**

5.1 Looked After Children (LAC)

Research has shown that one of the factors most likely to disadvantage LAC is the time lost in their education, especially prevalent when moving between places of residence. It is therefore important that attendance rates and patterns are monitored.

The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 stipulates that the governing body of all maintained schools must nominate a designated member of school staff to promote educational achievement (including attendance) of looked after children who are nominated at the school.

5.2 Gypsy and Traveller Children

The special position of Traveller Families is recognised by Section 444(b) of the Education Act 1996. Traveller parents are protected from conviction if the parent can demonstrate that:

- He or she is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as requires travel from place to place
- The child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits
- The child, where aged over six, has attended school for at least 200 sessions (half days) during the preceding twelve months.

Where traveller children are registered at more than one school, an authorised absence must be recorded for the school they are not attending – provided they are present at the other institution.

Further details can be found by following this link
http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/1006287attendance4en.pdf

5.3 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (including Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disabled pupils)

All local authorities must determine and arrange special educational provision where appropriate for the inclusion of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). The term ALN refers to those persons who receive education and training and have a 'greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of the same age'. This is to encompass all learners in Wales whose learning needs are greater than their peers of the same age and which do not necessarily amount to SEN as defined in the Section 312, Education Act 1996 and disabled children as defined in Section 17 (11), Children Act 1989 and Section 1(1), Disability Discrimination Act 1995. For further guidance refer to Inclusion and Pupil Support Guidance Circular 47/2006.

Where pupils, have limited mobility/mobility issues, the school should make special transport arrangements in accordance with Section 509 of the Education Act 1996 and the SEN Code of Practice for Wales (2004).

Under section 509 of the Education Act 1996, transport provided to a school that meets the child's special educational needs as agreed by the LA shall be provided free of charge; otherwise, if the parents' have a preferred school that might be further away the LA can agree to meet part or all of the transport costs.

In cases where attendance is a particular issue, the Attendance and Wellbeing Service will work closely with schools, parents and children to find the best solution. This may involve arranging home and school visits to discuss the situation and identifying reasons for non attendance, taking steps to try to get the child back into school and identifying any unknown-SEN and in such cases, working with the LA to arrange alternative provision.

5.4 Transported in

In many cases pupils have to travel further than the statutory walking distances to attend school i.e. 2 miles (3.2 kilometres) for primary school aged children and 3miles (4.8 kilometres) secondary school aged child as defined by Section 3 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Pupils who are dependant on external transport providers may be late after encountering delays from traffic congestion, transport failure and adverse weather. Cases where the above has occurred must be treated with consideration, particularly those schools which have a wide catchment area (greater than the statutory walking distances).

Pupils with additional learning needs may require special transport arrangements including alternative transport and additional staff support depending on the complexity or severity of the individual needs.

Schools should ensure that these provisions are met and that leniency and sympathy is shown if a pupil is absent or late due to factors out of their control e.g. late transport, inadequate support personnel and adverse weather conditions.

Also the schools should seek the support of AWS where appropriate to resolve other attendance related issues.

5.5 Children of Serving Forces Families

As part of the Community Covenant that RCT committed to adopting in November 2013, the local authority must provide the necessary support for forces families to suit their needs.   Part of this is to support the children of these families who receive an education from RCT but in order to do so they must be identified.   Therefore, a field on the SIMS system has been set up to record which schools are requested to utilise to indicate a pupil that falls into this category.   Regular reports will be produced to identify the number and location of forces families' children in schools in RCT.   In addition, the Covenant is supported by a grant scheme that welcomes bids for projects that will offer relevant support for these children and their families.   Therefore, the identification is necessary if schools wish to submit an application for this funding.   Full details can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-community-covenant-grant-scheme/armed-forces-community-covenant-grant-scheme.

5.6 Vulnerability Profiling Tool

Vulnerability profiling was first developed in Rhondda Cynon Taf in 2012 by the AWS as a means of early identification of those children and young people at risk of disengaging from learning as a result of barriers they face outside of the school environment. Its concept was the result of the findings of two significant research projects undertaken within Education and Lifelong Learning:

- Tackling Disengagement in Rhondda Cynon Taf (2008);

- Development of a Comprehensive Pathway to promote school attendance and prevent children and young people disengaging from education training and employment in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil (2011).

Whilst the outcome of both research projects led to operational developments (e.g. Building the Future Together; RCT Attendance Strategy; RCT Supporting Engagement in Education, Employment and Training Strategy), the need to develop a robust information system to support the identification of those at risk of disengaging and the provision of tailored support to prevent disengagement was a common recommendation from research findings.

Consultation with schools highlighted their dependency on either notification from statutory services or disclosure from families themselves that pupils were facing socio-economic barriers to attendance and engagement in learning. Similarly, organisations providing support for young people in post 16 settings reported difficulty in identifying and contacting those in most need of services. The implementation of the RCT Attendance and NEETs Pathway in late 2011, which included the reconfiguration of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and the creation of the SEETs Team within it, provided the ideal opportunity to develop the means to address this issue raised by schools and others. The outcome of this development is Vulnerability Profiling to identify, assess, track and engage those at risk of as well as those who have disengaged from education, employment and training. An integral consideration was the need to ensure that this process did not stigmatise or label individuals therefore the process produces the RAG status (red, amber, green) of an individual rather than providing any specific detail relating to personal circumstances.

The Vulnerability Profiling process and use of the data has been extensively piloted and tested in the school environment over the last 18 months in Key Stage 4, Key Stage 3 and most recently in Key Stage 2. It has also been rigorously tested within the Local Authority environment and is already being used by the Engagement and Participation Service (Attendance and Wellbeing Service, Post 16 SEETs Team and Youth Engagement and Participation Service) and Careers Wales as a service planning and outcome measurement tool.

The potential of Vulnerability Profiling to transform the way in which we target our services and provide early intervention has been widely recognised and our experience of developing it has been shared with Welsh Government, the Wales Audit Office, the Children's Commissioner for Wales and ESTYN. Vulnerability Profiling has been identified as sector leading practice by both the Welsh Government as part of the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework Trials and by Barnardo's Cymru as set out in their Children Affected by the Imprisonment of a Family Member Handbook for Schools (2014).

From September 2014 Vulnerability Profiling data will be made available to all schools on a termly basis. Therefore this Guidance has been developed to support schools to fully utilise Vulnerability Profiling data in order to plan, deliver and evaluate inclusive interventions that seek to secure positive outcomes for pupils who face barriers to attendance, engagement and participation in learning.

It is hoped that schools will integrate the use of this data into their existing tracking systems and data sets in order to facilitate early identification of the signs of pupil disengagement and address wellbeing concerns at a pupil level quickly and effectively. It is also hoped that schools will use it as a school improvement tool to support the wellbeing aspects of the Inspection Framework in the identification, tracking and monitoring of vulnerable pupils, as well as to inform decisions made about SEG and PDG spend focused on closing the gap.

Work continues to integrate more appropriate data sets in order for to develop the scope of factors included in the production of Vulnerability Profiling data and further refine its suitability as a diagnostic tool. This includes the building of new local data sets to cover areas of vulnerability we know contribute to increased risk of disengagement e.g. children of HM Forces families, children affected by parental imprisonment etc. Schools play a vital role in enabling us to gather this type of information that traditionally has not been centrally collated and this toolkit provides guidance to schools on how to do this.

Education and Lifelong Learning has made a commitment to the use of Vulnerability Profiling as its preferred method of early identification of those at risk of disengagement. This is demonstrated by the recent re-configuration of the Engagement and Participation Service where Vulnerability Profiling data is currently being used to drive and shape the provision of targeted support for children and young people aged 5-25 years.

For more information, please see the **Vulnerability Profiling Toolkit**, issued September 2014.

5.7 Notification Forms for Vulnerable Groups

To assist in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the pupils in RCT, notification forms have been devised to capture additional data that is not held in the SIMS system nor in general service area information systems. Instances where a school or service could declare their knowledge relating to a pupil's circumstances include:

- Young carer;
- Parent in prison;
- Adopted from out of county;
- Teenage pregnancy/parent (including fathers).

The collection of this information will be held in the same manner as the declaration of MARAC (domestic violence) cases involving a pupil, which are confidential but will be used to determine a pupil's vulnerability score. This is will ensure they are receiving the level of support they require without stigma or disclosure of personal information.

Copies of the notification form can be found in the *Appendix 7*.

6. Periods of Higher Risk for Poor Attendance

There are particular times of the academic year and stages of a pupil's life when poor attendance is of greater risk. These are outlined below.

6.1 Transition Periods

Transition periods are:

a) The move from one school to another (i.e. infants to juniors, juniors to secondary, secondary to secondary)
b) The movement from one Key stage to another (i.e. Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4)

As with any period of change, a school transition period can be deeply unsettling for the person involved, as it involves unfamiliar and unknown territory.

Typical anxieties relating to transition can include:

- New subjects
- New school
- New teachers – or, for primary to secondary transition children, the introduction of a timetabled day.
- New peers and classmates
- Possibly a longer or unfamiliar route to school
- Increased academic pressures
- Doubt regarding academic self-efficacy

In addition to these pressures, pupils will also be facing personal and social pressures as they move from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.

Many pupils will move successfully through transition but there are others that may face real issues overcoming the changes they face. For these, they may engage in avoidance behaviour such as non-attendance.

It is highly recommended that schools have systems in place to identify potentially vulnerable transition pupils and provide them with the support that they need to manage the period of change.

A large number of schools make use of Transition Projects and there are various models available for schools to adopt. It is also a recommended to get the parents of transition pupils involved at an early stage, as it promote cooperation and support, something that will be useful if attendance does become an issue at a later stage.

To support these endeavours, changes have been made to the AWO responsibilities to include year 5 and 6 primary cases in their caseload. It is hoped that having the continuity of a single officer overseeing the case of pupil between primary and secondary schools will provide the necessary support to engage the pupil and secure good attendance at secondary school.

Copies of all in-year admissions are now sent from the Admissions Team to the AWS to ensure pupils with poor attendance are provided with sufficient support during transfers and to ensure that attendance issues are seen in terms of a pupil's school career rather than in terms of the school attended. As part of the new In-Year Transfer Protocol (piloted with year 9, 10 and 11 pupils from September 2014), requests to transfer a pupil will automatically generate a referral to the YEPS. The pupil will work with the Youth Reengagement Officer at the current school until the start date of the new school where they will be transferred to the YRO in the receiving school.

6.2 End of Term

The end of term is a notoriously difficult time for securing attendance in schools. There are many reasons that contribute to this, including:

- More relaxed lessons give the impression that attendance is not necessary. Free lessons have the same effect;

- Lack of structure and momentum can mean lessons are boring for pupils;

- Parents may have a relaxed attitude toward end of term attendance;

- Parents may book family holidays for the end of term, when the prices are cheaper;

- Pupils may not want to participate in end of term activities, such as sporting activities. Or, their parents may not be in a position to pay for things such as trips.

In order to tackle this problem, schools should endeavour to devise innovative ways to engage with pupils and parents to instil a positive attitude towards remaining in school until the very last day of term. Introducing reward systems/incentives are an effective tool to encourage regular attendance up to the end of the term. The general idea is to reward pupils who achieve a 100% attendance record or over above set target, following this, the pupil will be awarded a certificate, may be a prize or an opportunity to enter to a lottery.

In addition to this, the school will enforce a whole school approach to emphasis the importance for all pupils to receive a full time education right up until the end of term. Providing structure and continuity to a child's education is integral to promoting regular attendance and helping pupils reach their potential.

Schools should work collaboratively in their clusters, standardising policies and procedures and sharing good practice. School should also adhere to policies and procedures and work towards achieving targets set out by the LA.

7. Standardised Procedures

7.1 Sanctions and Exclusions

Although exclusion is intended to punish and hopefully discourage challenging behaviour, it can actually lead to a compounding of the factors that led to the behaviour in the first place, such as low self-concepts, low self-esteem, low aspirations and difficulty in learning.

It is important that schools are aware of this, if they are to mitigate continued challenging behaviour and disengagement as far as is possible. Schools should do their utmost to support reintegration of pupils after fixed-term exclusion.

It is good practice for Headteachers to hold a reintegration meeting with parents and/or pupils after fixed term exclusion.

It is also good practice to conduct a wider review of the education of the pupil, with all interested parties. This should include the review of any Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) already in place or the introduction of a PSP if one did not already exist.

7.2 Registration

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, as required. A school register is a legal document that may be required to be presented as court evidence in Local Authority prosecutions for non-attendance. **It is an offence for schools not to maintain accurate registers.**

Rhondda Cynon Taf LA recommends that all schools should close their registers to pupils **30 minutes** after the start of the session, in line with guidance from the Welsh Government. Under no circumstances should schools leave their registers open for the entire session.

It is the duty of the AWS on behalf of the LA to formally inspect school registers. These are conducted centrally with any actions identified as needing to be undertaken communicated to the school in a formal and timely manner. Depending on the nature of the anomaly, this communication could be in the form of an email, telephone conversation, or as part of a formal visit.

The school has the responsibility to monitor individual attendance rates weekly and use their own intervention methods to tackle individual pupil attendance issues where that pupil's attendance rate is 86% and above. A referral to the AWS is required from the school when an individual's attendance falls to 85% or below (below 90% for KS4) over a six week period and there is no exceptional reason for this. It is essential that the school attempts to address the issue in-house prior to referral and the school is expected to detail all actions that have been taken on the referral form.

Schools have a statutory duty under section 175 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.

7.3 First Day Response

Schools should emphasise parents prime responsibility for ensuring attendance by asking parents to inform them as soon as possible if their child will not be attending school on a particular day. If a pupil is absent without explanation, school administrative staff should, wherever possible, contact the parents that same day, including in cases where the pupil skips lessons after registration.

By contacting parents, the schools also ensure that parents are aware that their child is not in school, enabling the parent to take steps, where necessary, to ensure the child is safe.

The cut-off point for contact from parents is the point at which the register closes. After this, schools should initiate First Day Response.

7.4 Weather/snow days

The decision to close a school should not be taken lightly – children have an annual entitlement to 190 days of education. When staff and pupils can get to school, the school should remain open no matter how few pupils are in attendance.

The responsibility for deciding to close a school lies with the Headteacher, in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of Governors. Judgements must be made having due regard to local circumstances. Before making a decision, the Headteacher must take reasonable steps to ascertain the situation at the school itself and discuss the matter with the Chair/Vice Chair.

The LA must be consulted and can offer advice, although the final decision lies with the school.

There is a 'checklist' document available from the LA, which can assist Headteachers in the decision making process.

As of 2010, school closure due to inclement weather conditions comes under registration code 'Y', meaning that the session/sessions missed are not counted in overall attendance figures.

7.5 Prosecutions

Prosecution should be a planned intervention in those cases where it is identified to be appropriate. It is a tool which, if applied consistently, can serve to protect a child's right to education and offers a way of engaging parents who have failed to co-operate with previous interventions to improve attendance. The LA has a

responsibility to ensure that their prosecution process is transparent, consistent and fair.

During 2013/14, RCT re-instated the aggravated offence legislation under Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1996 which can result in a parent(s) receiving a custodial sentence for not ensuring their child receives an appropriate education. Whilst this would only be used in the most extreme circumstances, it is an option available to the local authority in cases of significant parental disengagement.

The AWS is unable to take cases based on authorised absences. The AWS is only able to prosecute unauthorised absences.

7.6 Child Licensing

Many children enjoy performing, whether in plays, films, advertising or on television and parents enjoy supporting them. However, laws exist which are designed to protect children's welfare and prevent them from being exploited as stipulated by the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 and the Children (Performances) Regulations 1968). The Licensing Authority (LEA) must be satisfied:

- That the child's education will not suffer;

- That his or her health will not suffer;

- That the place of performance/rehearsal is satisfactory; and that,

- The conditions of the license will be observed.

The LEA is empowered to refuse a license if it is not satisfied the above will be met.

In RCT, the Safeguarding and Child Licensing Team Leader is responsible for licensing children who live in RCT and perform in a range of entertainments. Further information regarding licensing can be obtained from the Team Leader.

7.7 Children Missing Education (CME)

In September 2009, the WG commenced Section 436A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which requires that the local authority must make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a 'suitable education'. The purpose of the duty is to make sure that children and young people missing from education are identified quickly and that effective monitoring systems are put in place to ensure that action is taken to provide them with 'suitable education' once found. 'Suitable education', in relation to a child, is defined as efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have.

The duty applies to children and young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving suitable education other than at

school (EOTAS) (for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision) and who have been out of educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more).

The duty does not apply in relation to children who are registered at a school who are not attending regularly – the duty only applies to those who are not registered anywhere.

Statutory guidance to help prevent children and young people from missing education, including a practical toolkit, can be found at

http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/lang=en

Section 2: A Policy Framework for Improving School Attendance

In order to make a significant impact on attendance rates in RCT it is essential that all schools adopt and promote a whole school approach that encourages regular and punctual attendance. The purpose of this section is not to instruct, but to provide schools with guidance in creating a framework for the development of a whole school approach to attendance.

8. Developing a whole school approach to improving attendance

The importance of the processes schools employ to address attendance issues cannot be over-emphasised. An integral part of implementing a successful whole school approach is ensuring that all school staff are informed of, and are involved with, the process of addressing attendance matters. Having a clear understanding of a school's attendance profile enables a school to thoroughly assess current procedures and/or implement effective processes which suits their needs. The following questions will assist in creating an attendance profile for the school to determine your current situation and offer suggestions for improvements.

a. What is the current situation in your school?
- Why do we want to improve attendance?
- Do we want to improve the attendance of all students or particular groups of students?
- Do we want to decrease the number of unexplained absences in the school?
- How does attendance relate to the school's strategic plan?

b. Select an Attendance Improvement Team
- Who are the key stakeholders?
- Who should be involved in the improvement of attendance?
- How will the Attendance Improvement Team operate?
- How will we document the team's progress?

c. Revisit the current situation
- What attendance data sets are needed?
- How will they be collected?
- How will they be displayed?
- What is the prediction?

d. Analyse the causes
- What are the possible causes of variation in the attendance data?
- What additional data do we need?
- What are the actual causes of variation in the attendance data?

e. Develop a school-specific improvement model
- What are the possible actions we could take in relation to attendance?
- How will we prevent the causes of variation in the attendance data?
- What are the proposed solutions and/or processes?
- What is our action plan?
- What do we predict will happen when we implement our plan?
- What documentation is required to support our plan?

f. Implement the improvement
- To what extent are we following the plan?
- Are we capturing data as we go?
- To what extent is everyone involved in the attendance plan?

g. Study the results
- What are the results for our students and school?
- To what extent did our actions lead to improvement(s)?
- To what extent was our plan a success?
- What did we learn from implementing our plan?
- What would we do differently next time?

h. Standardise the improvement
- What documentation is required to support the improvement?
- How will the improvements be embedded in everyday practice?
- How will we continue to monitor performance?
- How will we share what we have learned?

i. Establish future plans
- What more do we need to learn?
- What should we be improving next?
- When will we review this improvement activity?

Once a clear profile of your school is established you will have the information needed to employ a wide range of strategies that are suited to your needs and are designed to:

- Inform pupils and parents about the critical importance of regular and punctual attendance and enforce the schools expectations.

- Support pupils to attend regularly and be punctual

- Keep parents updated with school attendance rates, and highlight any progress.

To support continuous school improvement, CSCJES Challenge Advisors may request that a school completes a self-evaluation document to ascertain the stage a school is at in terms of achieving a whole school approach to attendance. A copy of the audit tool can be found in *Appendix 8.*

9. Writing policy statements

An effective school attendance policy should set out the systems and procedures of the school for ensuring regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance.

It is important that the policy is written with input from a range of stakeholders as it will be more meaningful if developed in consultation with teachers, pupils, families, the Attendance and Wellbeing Service, administrative and ancillary staff, governors and senior management.

It is recommended that the Attendance Policy is reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose and accounts for any changes that may have occurred either nationally or locally. For academic year 2014/15, schools are required to update that attendance policy and any related documents with details of the introduction of fixed penalty notices and the changes to local policy in term of holidays in term time.

The Welsh Government's All Wales Attendance Framework identifies the following key components that should be included in attendance policy:

a. **The principles underlying the policy and how they apply to the whole school community:**
   • How the policy ties in to the school's approach to promoting emotional well-being.
   • How the policy links with the school's other policies.
   • How these principles relate to the school's overall aims and relate to the rest of the curriculum.

b. **Aims and targets:**
   • Specific but realistic targets for improving and maintaining attendance figures.
   • The resources a school invests in improving attendance.

c. **The rights, roles and responsibilities of governors, staff, pupils and parents:**
   • Details of the school's partnership agreement with the Education Welfare Service.
   • The legal responsibilities of the LA, school and parents should be cited.
   • Emphasis on a partnership approach between senior management, governors, and those working to support attendance with parents and pupils should be outlined.

d. **Procedures:**
   • The stages, processes and staffing involved in registration.
   • The system for lateness.
   • How and when problems with attendance are communicated to parents.
   • Processes used to reintegrate students returning to school after an absence.
   • Referral criteria to support services.

e. Strategies used by the school in the area of attendance:
- How rewards and sanctions are used to encourage regular attendance.
- The methods and means of achieving the school's strategies, including any training required for staff involved in implementation.

f. Monitoring and evaluation:
- How the school will evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies.
- When will monitoring and evaluation take place.
- Who will be involved in monitoring and evaluation and how will they contribute.
- How evaluations will be fed back into policy.

10. <u>Model framework for written policy statement</u>

Name of school: xxx

Date of policy: xxx

Member(s) of staff responsible for policy: xxx

Review Date: xxx

a) <u>Introduction</u>

What is the rationale for the Attendance Policy?

What issues were considered in developing this policy?

Who has been involved in the development of this policy?

What is the legal context of school attendance?

> *Legal context:*
>
> *Parents/Carers of pupils of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school or otherwise (Section 7, Education Act 1996).*
>
> *If a pupil of compulsory school age who is registered at school fails to attend regularly at the school then the parent is guilty of an offence (Section 444(1), Education Act 1996).*
>
> *It is the legal duty of the school to keep an accurate attendance register of all pupils (Section 434(1), Education Act 1996).*
>
> *All pupil's of compulsory age must be punctual and registered twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session (The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010).*
>
> *In line with the RCTCBC's Code of Conduct for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for regular non-attendance at school, the school has the power to request a penalty notice be issued to a parent if the attendance patterns of the pupil meet the criteria stated in the Code (The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) 2013).*

b) <u>Aims</u>

What is the aim(s) of the policy?

How do we plan to meet the aim(s) of this policy?

For example:

The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly. The aim of this of this attendance policy is to ensure that there is an efficient system, known to all, for ensuring a whole school approach to promoting good school attendance, and responding promptly and effectively to resolve attendance related issues.

This policy outlines the appropriate procedures in place and how the school will work with parents/carers and pupils to achieve this aim.

c) Expectations

What is expected from pupils?

What is expected from parents?

What is expected from the school?

For example:

Pupils of compulsory school age must be punctual for morning and afternoon registration

Pupils must be punctual attending every lesson

Punctuality is a legal requirement for all pupils of compulsory school age, and the parent(s)/carer(s) of a pupil whom is consistently late (after close of the classroom) i.e. persistent absenteeism may face legal proceedings.

If pupils need to leave/ be absent from school a note/medical card requesting permission is required from parents/carers

Parents will provide information and/or reasons for every absence.

d) Recording Attendance

Registration Procedures

What is time does the school day start and end?

What time is morning and afternoon registration?

What is recorded in the register and why?

For example:

Pupils must arrive at school between X and X.

Pupils must be punctual for registration at the following times:
Morning registration between X – X am
Afternoon registration between X – X pm

For any pupil who arrives after the registration period, an unauthorised late mark will be issued. The accuracy of the register is important in order to support any statutory intervention that may be required.

This register must record whether a pupil is present, absent, not required to attend or attending an approved educational activity (treated as present)

Importantly, every half-day absence must be classified as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised', only the school can make this decision

Definitions:

'Authorised absence'
- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent, guardian or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

'Unauthorised absence'
- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a Parent, Guardian or Carer.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

'An approved educational activity'
- One taking place of the school premises
- Approved by a person authorised by the Governing Body or Headteacher
- Supervised by a person authorised by the Governing Body or Headteacher
- Of an educational nature, including work experience, field trips, educational visits or where pupils are receiving part of their education at another location wile remaining on roll, and in most cases under school supervision.

'Not required to attend'
- Used for a small number of specific infrequent circumstances. An absence resulting from the partial closure of a school e.g. due bad weather when road conditions make some roads impassable

e) Responsibilities of the School

What is the responsibility of the school in terms of:
>Responding to attendance issues?
>Monitoring attendance levels?
>Setting attendance targets?
>Communicating with parents regarding attendance matters?
>Referral to outside agencies e.g. Attendance and Wellbeing Service?
>Requesting the issue of an FPN in line with the local authority's Code of Conduct.

In terms of attendance, what are the roles and responsibilities of:
>Governing Body?
>Headteacher?
>Senior Leadership Team?
>Heads of Year?
>Form Tutors?

> *For example:*
>
> *The school is accountable for accurately recording attendance and implementing appropriate procedures to achieve expected levels of attendance.*

f) Requests for leave of absence

What system is in place to request leave of absence?

- **Illness**

What system is in place to report pupil absence due to illness?

> *For example:*
>
> *Pupils are not expected to attend school when they are not well enough to do so, whether as a result of short term, long term or recurring illnesses.*
>
> *On first day of absence parents are expected to ring into school and leave a message on the answer phone to provide reason why their child isn't attending school that day.*

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office, which will endeavour to contact a parent, guardian or carer, if no reason has been provided.

When the child returns to school, a note should be brought from a parent or guardian to explain the absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment.

- **Family holidays during term time**

In line with the local authority decision to adopt a zero tolerance approach to the authorisation of holidays in term time, schools are requested to update their attendance policy to illustrate their intention to adhere to this policy.

For example:

Parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that schools will agree to family holidays during term time. To comply with The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013, 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 to authorise absences in line with The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 attendance codes and supplementary guidance provided by the local authority. "

g) Repeated unauthorised absences (i.e. Persistent Absenteeism)

What process is in place to respond to unauthorised absence?

What process is in place to respond to repeated unauthorised absences / persistent absenteeism?

For example:

The school will contact the parent, guardian or guardian of any pupil who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem.

If the situation does not improve and the pupil's attendance drops below 86% (90% for Key Stage 4 pupils) within the previous 6 week period, the school will then refer to the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS), who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

> *The AWS provides support to schools, pupils and parents to ensure regular attendance and address problems relating to absenteeism. The service liaises with other agencies and provides an important link between home and school. It helps parents and teachers to work in partnership to ensure that pupils benefit from regular attendance.*
>
> *The responsibility of the Local Authority is devolved to the AWS. Where 'persistent absenteeism' continues despite input from the governors, supported by the AWS, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.*

h) <u>Monitoring and reviewing attendance levels</u>

How is attendance monitored at a whole school level?

How is attendance monitored at a class level?

How is attendance monitored at an individual pupil level?

How will this data be used?

Who will have access to this data?

> *For example:*
>
> *It is the responsibility of the school to:*
> - *monitor pupil attendance on a weekly basis;*
> - *monitor overall attendance on a half-termly (six week) basis;*
> - *submit attendance rates to the LA on a half-termly (six week) basis;*
> - *liaise with the LEA to discuss targets to improve attendance; and*
> - *for Estyn and Welsh Government Purposes make attendance data available.*

i) <u>Strategies for Improving Attendance</u>

How does the school promote good attendance?

How does the school communicate to pupils and parents the benefits of regular attendance?

What whole school initiatives are in place?

What targeted interventions are in place?

Are there any incentive / reward schemes in place for good / improved attendance?

Does the school work in partnership with other schools / agencies to improve attendance?

11. Developing a cluster based approach to improving attendance

In addition to tackling attendance as a whole school, there are many advantages at looking at attendance issues on a cluster basis.

Attendance Wellbeing Service monitor attendance data on a cluster basis enabling the effective identification of attendance issues across sibling groups and support a more holistic approach to addressing issues faced by families.

A cluster based approach will also help identify issues that impact on school attendance that stem from the demographic features of a geographical catchment area e.g. factors such as size, socio economic position, transport and infrastructure etc. It will also allow for assessment of the characteristics of particular cohorts across schools within a particular locality. Knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of a particular cluster will enable AWS staff to intervene in the most appropriate way, being more efficient, effective and innovative in improving attendance levels.

Adopting a cluster approach strengthens a school's ability to address the myriad of reasons behind poor school attendance by drawing on the support and expertise offered by the range agencies and networks operating across the community providing services for children, young people and families.

Fundamentally a cluster based approach will facilitate the positive improvement of attendance rates within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

12. Model framework for written cluster policy statement

Template Cluster Attendance Policy Statement

Name of Cluster: xxx
Schools in Cluster: X
                                  Y
                                  Z

Date of Policy: xxx
Member(s) Responsible: xxx
Review Date: xxx

Statement of Intent

The school cluster is committed to promoting a positive and supporting environment for encouraging all pupils to attend regularly, and maximise their potential.

Beyond the parents' legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) receives appropriate, full-time education, the school cluster has procedures, strategies in place to support every member of the school community to attend regularly.

Our Commitment to Action

Our school cluster is committed to ensuring that all pupils within the community attend regularly, and are punctual, through the provision of a whole school community environment that encourages regular attendance. This is achieved by: working with the Local Authority (LA), governors, parents/carers and pupils in matters of attendance; implementing supporting protocols, procedures and strategies; and responding promptly and effectively to resolve any attendance problems.

All individual schools within the cluster are dedicated to improving school attendance. In order to achieve this, we maintain strict monitoring and evaluation procedures and establish realistic attendance targets.

Expected Levels of Attendance/What is regular attendance

The Local Authority (LA) has set an ambition of 95% attendance for all schools in RCT by 2016. The formula used by the LA to set attendance targets recognises the challenges faced by some schools in meeting this standard and seeks to set challenging yet realistic targets for improvement identifying the progress necessary to reach this ambition
.

Aims and Objectives of Cluster Policy Statement

As individual schools, we are committed to ensuring we provide a consistent and equitable approach to addressing attendance issues in order to provide a positive and supporting environment to encourage all of our pupils to attend regularly. This Cluster Policy Statement intends to formalise our commitment to implementing a consistent equitable approach across the cluster. We will achieve this by agreeing to:

- engage and regularly communicate with parents and pupils in relation to attendance procedures, strategies and targets;

- ensure that all governors, staff, pupils and parents are consulted on the development of attendance policies within our individual schools, and are aware of its content;

- ensure that the attendance policies, within our individual schools, adheres to relevant legislation and takes account of Welsh Government (WG) guidance on Inclusion and Pupil Support and good practice identified by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC);

- maintain accurate, up to date attendance registers of all pupils, in which we enforce that all pupils attend registration twice a day; at the start of the morning session and during the afternoon session;

- uphold the requirement of parents to provide information/reason for every absence; and request leave for any medical/dental appointments, family holidays and other short-term or long-term leave;

- communicate to parents and pupils that poor punctuality/repeated lateness and unauthorised absences is unacceptable;

- work in partnership with the LA's Attendance & Well Being Service (AWS), to improve the attendance of pupils by fulfilling our responsibilities to address attendance issues at an early stage, prior to referral of pupils with below 86% (90% for KS4) attendance, to the service and adhering to the AWS referral criteria and processes;

- monitor progress towards attendance targets; reviewing and sharing the effectiveness of attendance procedures and strategies on a regular basis ;

- improve school attendance and liaise with the LA to set realistic and achievable attendance targets (based upon monitored attendance rates);

- submit required attendance data to the LA on time as per the Attendance Data Collections Timetable;

- operate in line with the local authority's Code of Conduct for Regular Non-Attendance at School (Fixed Penalty Notices);

- Adopt the local authority's zero tolerance approach to holidays in term time.

Signatures of Headteachers:_____

Date:_____

Section 3: Attendance Data Requirements

The Welsh Government's All Wales Attendance Analysis Framework sets out a standardised and robust approach to analysing and using school attendance data to enable local authorities to focus on identifying good practice and systematic problems. As part of this process the Welsh Government sends each local authority benchmarked data for attendance at a local authority level and their assessment of the authority's strengths and weaknesses.

Both schools and the local authority have adopted a more proactive approach to the prevention of and management of poor school attendance, the impact of which is evidence in the improved attendance levels over the past three years. However, whilst much work has been undertaken to improve our management information systems in standardising procedures in terms of data capture and analysis, further developments must still be made to fully realize the potential of the data available to target the areas most in need of intervention.

13. <u>Attendance data responsibilities of schools</u>

13.1 Attendance registers

Schools are required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, to take an attendance register twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important in order to support statutory interventions that may be required to be undertaken by the AWS. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers. A school register is a legal document that may be required to be presented as court evidence in Local Authority prosecutions for non-attendance.

Rhondda Cynon Taf LA recommends that all schools should close their registers to pupils **30 minutes** after the start of the session, in line with guidance from the Welsh Government. Under no circumstances should schools leave their registers open for the entire session.

It is the duty of the AWS on behalf of the LA to formally inspect school registers.

All staff involved with the registration process should be made aware that the law is specific regarding the keeping of registers. Marking and accuracy of the register is of the utmost importance.

It is good practice and strongly encouraged by the local authority that schools utilise the SIMS notes fields to state the reason for the code usage and include any information relating to that session, e.g. time of arrival if a late code is used (L or U); type of medical appointment and type of evidence that is held on pupil file (copy of appointment card, prescription etc.).

13.2 Clear missing marks

Schools must ensure that there are no missing marks on the school SIMS system. If a pupil is absent and the reason is not known, Code N must be used until the reason for the absence is ascertained and the code changed to reflect this.

13.3 Accurate code usage

It is the schools responsibility to ensure that the correct code is used in both AM and PM sessions for each pupil as stated in Welsh Government Guidance document 'Guidance on School Attendance Codes – July 2010'.

Every endeavour should be made to establish a reason for absence from school. Until a reason is obtained, the absence must be coded using Code N. Schools should ensure they have systems and procedures in place to follow up these absences and establish the reason, ideally within a 2 week timescale. If no reason for absence is provided, code N should be replaced with Code O – Other Unauthorised Circumstances.

Discussions with Attendance Leads within schools have highlighted the need for clarification on the use of commonly used absence codes. For guidance of the use of codes, see *Appendix 9.*

Furthermore, to ensure compliance with the local authority's Internal Audit recommendations, schools should utilise the SIMS notes field facility to capture relevant information relating to the session absence. This information will assist to develop a 'picture' of the pupil's absence, identifying trends and likely causes which can then be auctioned by the school. In addition, it will serve as evidence for a referral to the AWS and/or information for statutory proceedings.

Where a pupil attends EOTAS provision on apart time basis, therefore, remaining on the roll of the mainstream school, it is the responsibility of the **mainstream** school to determine the attendance of the pupil and ensure the register is marked correctly. This should be conducted by contacting the EOTAS provider on a regular basis for details of the pupil's attendance, and the mainstream school's register being updated accordingly. Schools should not 'blanket' mark a pupil as present using a B or D code for the period of their time offsite. Registers will checked for compliance by cross referencing the EOTAS records with mainstream school records.

13.4 School attendance data collection timetable

School have previously had two weeks grace to finalise their registration data before the local authority collates it for analysis. However, do to increasing pressures and decreasing resources, both schools and the AWS need to be able to act on data more timely if we are to see the improvements. Therefore, **schools will now have one school week to update their attendance data**. This means that the local authority will generate their half termly reports at the end of the first week of the half term for the previous half term period.

Schools are not required to submit half termly reports to the LA, however the Annual WG Attendance Collection will still need to be submitted via DEWi.

13.5 Target setting

The LA has set realistic yet appropriately challenging attendance targets for all schools in RCT using an agreed formula that utilises the FSM Benchmarking Quartile information for individual schools. The formula used to set the targets is available on request.

14. Attendance data responsibilities of the LA

Thorough analysis of data across the local authority is required to ensure RCT continues to improve standards of school attendance and attainment. Analysis of this data alone is unlikely to provide solutions, however, the questions it raises provides an excellent starting point to address issues at school and local authority levels.

The Welsh Government Attendance Framework stipulates that it is good practice for local authorities to collect, analyse and disseminate data on attendance. Local authorities should be collecting and analysing attendance data on at least a half-termly basis. Ideally best practice would be to collect it on a weekly or monthly basis.

It is a requirement that the thorough analysis of attendance data is used to highlight the early indicators of disengagement which can ultimately lead to persistent absence.

The Local Authority, Schools, the Attendance and Wellbeing Service and other internal and external services should be working together and sharing valuable data to inform service and strategic planning.

14.1 SIMS Attendance Data – LA Read only access

The LA have read-only access to attendance and pupil details. The LA will not amend schools data.

14.2 Data analysis

Once the LA has collated the data, it will be checked for accuracy and summarised. The LA will regularly provide schools with the findings of the analysis undertaken.

Attendance data averages used by the LA are calculated on a whole school basis by pupil rather than by class.

Developments in the collation, analysis and use of data over the past three years include:

Half termly data reports are compiled for each school cluster detailing the code usage across each of the six half terms. The report also highlights a comparison with the same period the previous year. Trends can be determined within each cluster and will be used to inform the level and type of support each locality needs to continue improving its attendance rates. Analysis will allow for exception reports to be generated on schools that are underperforming to target or where anomalies are present in code usage.

Data Response Visits will be arranged with those schools with coding and/or process anomalies, identified through the half termly reports and registration compliance checks, as a means of formally recording this advice and guidance to

schools, determine actions to address the anomalies and evidence the service provided and improvements achieved. Copies of discussions held during Data Response Visits (DRV) will be given to schools as supporting evidence for Challenge Advisors and/or ESTYN inspections. A copy of the DRV template can be found in *Appendix 10*.

Attendance Target Setting was undertaken for all RCT schools in a revised format for academic year 2013/14. A set of rules were applied to each school, and supplemented by local knowledge to determine the most suitable target for each setting. This approach allowed for an individually assigned target that was appropriate to the school and its circumstances. Every school's target is set as a minimum to the median for their FSM group and accounting for the following factors:

- School inspection date and category;
- Current performance against existing 3 year targets set December 2012;
- Comparison of existing performance to median;
- FSM quartiles;
- Percentage of pupils with attendance rates below 86% (in order to assess level of AWS intervention);
- School size;
- Known exceptional factors that impeded last years performance;
- Level of support available from AWS

A similar formula for the calculation of future years will be used, with allowance for changes in national policy, as well as local developments.

Schools are advised of their new targets by autumn half term, following the verification of the previous year's full data set.

Registration compliance checks across schools continue to be conducted to ensure the accurate use of attendance codes. Where anomalies are identified, the AWS will contact the school to determine the reason for the usage and if it is incorrect, actions will be jointly agreed to rectify the error.

Internal Audit investigations are commissioned as a means of inspecting code usage across all of the secondary schools and the outcomes from those arranged during 2013-14 have demonstrated that whilst the appropriate systems and procedures for effective registration practices are in place, more guidance for the accuracy of coding is needed to comply with legal requirements. To continue with this work it has been agreed that Internal Audit will include a registration compliance test in all school reviews in the future.

Statutory Register Inspections in both primary and secondary schools are operated remotely using a standardised template and in the event that there are anomalies or queries then the school will be contacted. Register compliance checks are done randomly which makes it imperative that all schools maintain their registers on a weekly basis so that the information is accurate and up to date. To support this further, the Referral and Coding Officer, based within the

AWS, will conduct site visits (pre-arranged with schools) to undertake registration practice checks as a means of quality assuring their registration processes. This will include the review of the use of the SIMS notes fields and the retention of supplementary evidence such as holiday request forms, medical appointment cards etc.

14.3 Target setting

The Local Authority (LA) is striving to achieve the local authority ambition of 95% for school attendance by 2016, and the target setting process accounts for this in its calculations. The formula used by the LA to set attendance targets recognises the challenges faced by some schools in meeting this standard and seeks to set challenging yet realistic targets for improvement identifying the progress necessary to reach this ambition. For this reason, targets have been set individually for each school based where they are required achieve the benchmark median for their FSM group as a minimum.

15. Data Analysis

WG Wales Attendance Framework document provides examples of the type of analysis for LA's.

233. LAs need to give schools access to local and national data so they can have the opportunity to act on it. The following table sets out some possible analyses and gives examples of possible uses.

Type of analysis	Some possible uses of analysis for LAs	Some possible uses of analysis for schools
Analysis of overall attendance rates of schools within LA.	Enables LA to determine which schools are in difficulty and which schools are doing well.	Allows schools to get a sense of their relative position locally and how important the issue is for them.
Analysis of unauthorised absence rates in schools within LA.	As above but also when analysed at absence code level provides an insight into specific trends or issues e.g. increase in extended family holiday in excess of agreement.	Allows schools to consider and focus on specific areas of concern e.g. late arrivals after registration closes.
Analysis of persistent absentee rates.	Enables LA to determine school or area which may have a problem with this.	Allows schools to consider and focus on specific individuals and put in place measures to tackle the problem.
Analysis of attendance rates in different year groups.	Provides the LA with an insight into trends or issues between different cohorts.	As with LAs but also provides information on issues like the possible effectiveness of staff or school systems with respect to attendance.
Analysis of improvement in attendance rates in LA.	Provides a measure of how hard a school is working on attendance issues. May also give an insight into where there is effective practice.	Allows schools to see whether or not measures they are taking are having an impact and where other local schools may have good practice.

Type of analysis	Some possible uses of analysis for LAs	Some possible uses of analysis for schools
Comparison of data with national averages.	Provides an overview of the LA compared to other LAs nationally and puts local achievements in context.	Provides a view on how the school is achieving compared to national standards.
Comparison of data with statistical neighbours	As above but in the context of a variety of socio economic factors.	As above but in the context of a variety of socio economic factors
Comparison of data between local schools with similar characteristics	This provides the LA with an opportunity to make valid comparisons (based on issues such as size and FSM etc.) between local schools.	Allows local schools the opportunity to partner with each other in a meaningful context to spread good practice.
Comparison of pupil cohorts at phases of transition (e.g. key stage 2 to 3).	Allows LAs to assess the impact on attendance of transferring school.	Gives schools a measure on how effective they are at smoothing transition for pupils.
Correlation between SEN and attendance	Could be used to provide an insight into the effectiveness of a social inclusion policy.	Highlights potential access and inclusion issues.
Correlation between ethnicity, gender, looked after status and attendance	Highlights potential access and inclusion issues.	Highlights potential access and inclusion issues.
Correlation between behaviour and attendance	Highlights potential inclusion issues.	Highlights potential inclusion issues.
Correlation between attendance and achievement	Fundamental to maximising achievement.	Fundamental to maximising achievement.

Analysis of school attendance data at a LA level on a half termly basis will enable the monitoring and identification of trends in absence across the County Borough, in order for the Attendance and Wellbeing Service to provide a pro-active, effective and targeted service. It will also enable the LA to support schools most effectively to meet the attendance targets set, as well as measure the impact of the service the AWS provide.

Appendices

Appendix 1   Code of Conduct for Non-Attendance at School
Appendix 2   Engagement and Participation Staffing Structure
Appendix 3   AWS Referral Form – Blank
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Appendix 5   In-Year Transfer - Flowchart
Appendix 6   In-Year Transfer – Intention to Transfer Form
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Appendix 8   CSCJES Self Evaluation/Audit Tool
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Appendix 10   Data Response Visit Template
Appendix 11   Further Information – Contact Details
                       Further Information – Useful Publications

Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for Non-Attendance at School (Fixed Penalty Notices)

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Fixed Penalty Notice for
Non-Attendance at School

Code of Conduct

September 2014

1. Legal basis and rationale

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and essential if children and young people are to have access to a range of educational opportunities enabling them to have the best chance to succeed in life and become active responsible participants in the communities in which they will live as adults. Children and young people have the right to an appropriate education which meets their needs and when they are in school are also at less risk of harm.

The majority of learners attend school regularly, arrive punctually and are fully engaged with the curriculum, but for some, attending school regularly is a challenge and this can be for a variety of reasons. A range of assessment and intervention strategies are available from schools and officers from the Local Authority to help families overcome barriers to regular attendance, with sanctions of any nature only used as a last resort.

In Wales, legislation (The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013) has given local authorities new powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to the parents of children and young people who are persistently absent from school and/or pupil referral units (PRUs) without authority. It is recommended that in Rhondda Cynon Taf the Attendance and Wellbeing Service (AWS) within the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate have sole responsibility for issuing FPNs in response to requests made by headteachers, their nominated deputies or the police.

An FPN is a fine of £60 which may be issued to a parent/carer as a result of their child's unauthorised absence from school. The Welsh Government has introduced them as an added means of addressing unauthorised absence from school particularly in circumstances where there is a reasonable expectation that its use will secure an improvement in the future. Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that once registered at a school their child attends regularly. An offence occurs when a parent/carer fails in that duty and cannot offer any justifiable reason for absences.

The legislation governing the implementation of FPNs is outlined in the following:

- Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013;
- Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011;
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (the Right to an Education).

Head teachers are obliged to make judgements on the authorising of absence and subsequent coding (All Wales Attendance Codes 2010) to categorise the reason for absence. All schools have Attendance Policies which must clearly outline the day to day procedures in place to follow up pupil absence and how they will determine whether an absence is justified or not. Registration Regulations state that the statutory (lawfully acceptable) defences for school absence are that:-

- The absence is authorised;
- The pupil was prevented from attending due to illness or other unavoidable cause;
- The absence occurred on a day set aside for religious observance;
- The local authority has failed to make suitable travel arrangements to facilitate attendance (Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008);
- The child is excluded.

Following the introduction of FPNs all local authorities in Wales are required to have in place a Code of Conduct within which all partners will operate as part of the statutory duties for ensuring school attendance. In RCT it is recommended that the AWS be solely responsible for the operational functions of this Code of Conduct on behalf of the Local Authority which will ensure the process is managed consistently across the County Borough.

2. Who can issue a Fixed Penalty Notice?

The legislation allows headteachers and the police (including their nominated deputies) as well as designated local authority officers (AWS) the powers to issue FPNs. However, in order to ensure consistent practice and avoid the potential for issuing duplicate FPNs it is recommended that the management and processing arrangements in RCT will be the sole responsibility of the AWS.

The service will work in consultation and partnership with schools, PRUs, and local police officers to ensure that:

- FPNs are used consistently;
- FPNs are not issued when proceedings under section 444 (1) or (1A) are being contemplated or have commenced;
- Relationships between schools and families are not compromised;
- There is no conflict with any other intervention already in place.

3. Current RCT Practice in Response to Pupil Absence

RCT's AWS has developed an Attendance Toolkit, used by schools and PRUs to ensure that statutory obligations for registration processes and practices are managed effectively, with good attendance highlighted as a priority and closely linked to improved outcomes.

The Toolkit outlines the actions schools should take in following up absence and it is important that school staff intervene as early as possible when there are signs that a pupil may be disengaging from learning. Following school's initial interventions it may be appropriate to refer into AWS to instigate further investigation into cases of irregular attendance and only following a period of assessment and intervention to help resolve a concern will legal proceedings be considered and then only where parental cooperation is either absent or deemed insufficient to support the child's education.

It is not intended that the new legislation for FPNs be used as a response to entrenched non attendance or change the traditional AWS casework with

families. FPNs are intended more as a means of swift intervention and they are thought to be most effective when issued for specific circumstances, over periods such as Key Stage 4 lead up to examinations or even with certain age groups of pupils. The FPN process will not be reactionary to immediate circumstances e.g. truancy operations and warning letters which are a required part of the process will in many cases be enough to raise parental awareness of the concerns and lead to an improvement.

This Code of Conduct defines how RCT will introduce and operate the FPN process outlining the circumstances and threshold criteria expected to be applied consistently and equitably across the County Borough and all persons authorised to request an FPN be issued i.e. head teachers and police and their nominated deputies must comply with the detail set out in this Code of Conduct.

4. Circumstances for Issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice

It will be the responsibility of schools/PRUs and/or police to **request** that the AWS issue an FPN and those requests will only be considered where there is proven evidence of unauthorised absence due to the following circumstances:

- Where there is a minimum of 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) in the current term (these do not need to be consecutive);

- Pupils are persistently arriving after the close of the registration period i.e. more than 10 sessions in the current term; (Recommended that registers be kept open for thirty minutes);

- Where parent/carers have failed to engage with the school and/or the AWS in attempts to improve attendance but where court sanctions have not been instigated;

- A period of absence from school due to a holiday that was not authorised by school;

- A pupil has regularly come to the attention of the police during school hours and is absent from school without an acceptable reason.

Once the circumstances are proven the AWS will then assess whether an FPN should be issued taking the following into account:

- The level of absence;
- Any Equalities considerations relating to the child or family (as listed in the Council's Equality Policy);
- Any statement of Special Educational Needs;
- History of the attendance issues and action taken;
- Welsh Government (WG) Guidance;
- The likely effectiveness of an FPN as a tool for obtaining compliance;
- The level of parent engagement/cooperation.
- Any adverse effect a fine will have on the welfare of the family.

5. Procedure for Issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice

The AWS will respond to all requests to issue an FPN within ten school days and where satisfied that all relevant criteria are met will:-

- Send a formal written warning to the parent/carer notifying them that they may receive a fixed penalty notice and why;
- Set a period of 15 days during which the pupil must not have any unauthorised absences from school;
- If at the end of the 15 days there has been no improvement a penalty notice will be issued via first class post;
- If there is an improvement and there are no unauthorised absences then the FPN will not be issued.

Please note *that where a school requests that an FPN be issued as a response to a period of unauthorised holiday absence the formal warning letter and 15 day improvement period will not apply.*

6. Legal practicalities

An FPN is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 28 days (but within 42 days of receipt). If the FPN is not paid in full by the end of the 42 days the local authority must either: -

- Prosecute parents/carers in the usual way using section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996) or
- Withdraw the FPN (in limited circumstances as set out in this Code of Conduct).

Only one FPN will be issued to a parent in any one academic year but where there may be more than one poorly attending pupil in a family, FPNs may be issued on more than one child in that family. It will be at the discretion of the AWS whether to issue an FPN on one or both parents/carers.

Whilst there are no restrictions on the number of times a parent may receive a formal warning of an FPN it would not be acceptable to issue "warnings" repeatedly without making further investigations of the wider circumstances.

7. Payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the FPN.

Once paid the parent/carer's liability for the period in question is discharged and they cannot then be subsequently prosecuted under other enforcement powers (section 444 (1)) for the same period covered by the FPN.

Subject to compliance with Section 21 of the Regulations, RCT will retain the value of revenue from FPNs needed to cover the enforcement costs associated with the issue, collection or in the event of non payment cases progressing to prosecution.

8. Non-payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice

Non-payment of an FPN will trigger prosecution procedures brought under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

9. Withdrawal of a Fixed Penalty Notice

Once issued, an FPN will only be withdrawn where it is proven that:

- The notice has been issued to the wrong person/to the incorrect address;
- The notice did not conform to this Code of Conduct;
- Circumstances and evidence demonstrate that the FPN should not have been issued e.g. provision of medical evidence (parents/carers have the 15 day period to submit this evidence).

Notification of the withdrawal will be given to the parent/carer and any amount paid will be repaid to the person who paid it. No proceedings will continue or be instituted against the parent/carer for the offence in connection with which the withdrawn FPN was issued or for an offence under section 444(1 and 1A) of the Education Act 1996 arising out of the same circumstances.

There is no statutory right of appeal against the issuing of an FPN. Should a parent/carer wish to contest an FPN then they may submit complaints to the AWS and/or face proceedings in the Magistrates Court under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

10. Policy and publicity

In order to ensure parents and carers are fully aware of the FPN legislation, it is required that all schools/PRUs with the support of their governing body/board of management clearly include information on the FPN legislation in their Attendance Policy.

11. Annual review and reporting

RCT's AWS will monitor the use of FPNs as part of the local monitoring quality assurance process with quantitative data being made available to Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee, Senior Management and the Welsh Government on request.

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed on an annual basis and if necessary be amended depending on the impact of the previous year's operation.

12. How to get further information

Further information on the operation of this Code of Conduct and FPNs is available from:

Prosecution Lead,
Attendance and Wellbeing Service,
Ty Trevithick,
Abercynon,
CF45 4UQ (01443 744282) aws@rctcbc.gov.uk

Appendix 2:   Engagement and Participation Service Staffing Structure

Head of Engagement and Participation

Youth Engagement and Participation Service Manager

SEETs Co-ordinator

Attendance and Wellbeing Service Manager

YEPS Team Leader (D of E)

YEPS Team Leader (Entitlements)

YEPS Team Leader (Accreditted Learning)

YEPS Team Leader (Early Intervention)

YEPS Team Leader (Closing the Gap)

YEPS Data & MI Officer

Referral and Coding Officer

AWS Team Leader (Child Licensing and Protection)

AWS Team Leader (Prosecution)

AWS Team Leader (Children Missing Education & Wellbeing)

Outdoor Education Officer

Wicid Officer

Entitlement Support Officers

Youth Participation Officers

Youth Participation Officers

Youth Participation Officers

Transitional Support Workers

Attendance and Wellbeing Officers

Attendance and Wellbeing Officers

Attendance and Wellbeing Officers

Youth Re-engagement Officers

Youth Re-engagement Officers

Youth Re-engagement Officers

Attendance Intervention Officers

Attendance Support Officers

Attendance Support Officers

Attendance Support Officers

5*60 Officers

5*60 Officers

5*60 Officers

Engagement Support Officers

Engagement Support Officers

Engagement Support Officers

YEPS Admin Officers

SEETs Admin Officer

AWS Admin Officer

Appendix 3: AWS Referral Form - Blank

AWS REFERRAL FORM / Ffurflen Atgyfeirio	
Date of Referral/Dyddiad Atgyfeirio:	
Pupil Tribal Reference Number (office use only):	

Referral made by/Atgyfeiriwyd gan:	**Position/Swydd:**	**School/Ysgol:**
   	 	

<RECORD START>

Previous School / Ysgol Flaenorol:	**Previous School End Date / Dyddiad gadael yr ysgol flaenorol::**	**Date of Admission to Current School / Dyddiad Mynediad :**
<School name>	<DOL>	<DOA>

1. Pupil Personal Details / Manylion Personol y Disgybl			
Forename(s)/ Enw(au) Cyntaf	<Forename> <Middle name(s)>	**Surname/ Cyfenw**	<Legal Surname>
Date of Birth/ Dyddiad Geni	<DOB>	**Gender/ Rhyw**	<Gender>
Address/ Cyfeiriad	<AddressLine>		

Reg / Dosb.	<Reg>	**Year/ Bl.**	<Year>	**Eligible for FSM/ Cinio Ysgol am Ddim**	<Eligible for free meals>
Siblings / Enwau Brodyr a Chwiorydd:	 				

Child Protection Register/ Gofrestr Amddiffyn Plant	☐	**In LA Care/ Dan ofal ALl**	☐
Young Carer/ Cynhaliwr Ifanc	☐	**Youth Offending Service/ Gwasanaeth Troseddu Ieuenctid**	☐
Parent In Prison / Rhiant wedi'l carcharu:	☐		☐

SEN Status/ Statws AAA	<SEN Status>	**SEN Need Type/ Math o AAA**	<Need type>

2. Parental Details / Manylion Rhieni	
Name of Parent/Guardian / Enw'r rhiant/gwarcheidwad	<Contact Full>
Contact Telephone No/ Rhif Ffôn	<Main Telephone>
Relationship Type: (parent, grandparent etc) / Fath o perthynas (rhiant /mam-gu /tad-cu ayyb)	

Name of Parent/Guardian / Enw'r rhiant/gwarcheidwad	<Contact Full>
Contact Telephone No/ Rhif Ffôn	<Main Telephone>
Relationship Type: (parent, grandparent etc) / Fath o perthynas (rhiant /mam-gu /tad-cu ayyb)	

3. Attendance Information / Gwybodaeth Presenoldeb

Attendance Record This academic year to date/ Y flwyddyn academaidd bresennol hyd heddiw	% Attendance/Presenoldeb	<% Present + AEA>
	Actual/Nifer	<Present + AEA>
	Possible/Nifer Posibl	<Possible>
	% Authorised Absence/Absennol gyda chaniatâd	<% Authorised absences>
	% Unauthorised Absence/Absennol heb ganiatâd	<% Unauthorised absences>
Explanation of Authorised Absence/Esboniad o'r presenoldeb gyda chaniatâd	 	
Reason for Use of Code 'O' / Rheswm dros ddefnyddio'r côd 'O'	 	

Registration Certificate Attached / Tystysgrif Cofrestru wedi'i hatodi	☐

Other Agencies Involved/ Asiantaethau eraill sydd ynglŷn â'r achos Y/N	Learning Support	☐	School Nurse	☐	School Counselling	☐
	Behaviour Support	☐	SENAS	☐	On Track	☐
	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service	☐	Education & Child Psychology Service	☐	PLACE / Ymbarel	☐
	Other (Please describe)	☐	 			

4. School Action / Camau Gwithredu'r Ysgol

Details of Telephone Calls Made / Manylion Galwadau Ffôn:

Date/Dyddiad:	Contact Name / Enw'r Cyswllt	Summary of Telephone Call / Crynodeb o'r alwad Ffôn
   	 	
   	 	
   	 	

███	███	███	

Details of Letters Sent to Parents/Guardians / Manylion y llythyron a anfonwyd at Rhieni/Gwarcheidwaid

Date/Dyddiad:	Letter Type /Math o Lythyr (E.g. %Attendance)
███	███
███	███
███	███

Dates of Meetings with Parents/Guardians / Dyddiadau Cyfarfod(ydd) gyda Rhieni/Gwarcheidwaid

Date/Dyddiad:	Reason / Rheswm
███	███
███	███
███	███

Dates of FPN Warnings Sent to Parents/Guardians / Dyddiad y rhybuddion HCB a anfonwyd I Rhieni/Gwarcheidwaid

Date/Dyddiad:	Reason / Rheswm
███	███
███	███
███	███

5. Nature of contact with referrer (including length of contact) / Natur y cyswllt gyda'r person sy'n atgyfeirio (yn cynnwys amser y cyswllt):
███

6. Reasons for Referral / Rhesymau dros Atgyfeirio		
Attendance / Presenoldeb	☐	*Please complete Section 7 / Cwblhewch adran 7*
Attendance & Wellbeing / Presenoldeb a Materion Lles	☐	*Please complete Sections 7& 8 / Cwblhewch adrannau 7 & 8*
Wellbeing Only / Materion Lles yn Unig	☐	*Please complete Sections 8 / Cwblhewch adran 8*
Emergency Wellbeing (pupil not seen for at least 5 days) / Mater Lles Argyfwng (disgybl heb ei weld am oleiaf 5 diwrnod)	☐	*Please complete Sections 8 / Cwblhewch adran 8*
Child Missing Education / Plentyn sy'n Colli Addysg	☐	*Please complete Sections 9 / Cwblhewch adran 9*

7. Reason for Referral - Attendance / Rheswm dros Atgyfeirio - Presenoldeb:

Please provide any relevant information regarding the pupil (including appropriate background information and pupil's behaviour)/ Darparwch unrhyw gwybodaeth perthnasol ynglin a'r disgybl (gan gynnwys gwybodaeth cefndirol perthnasol ac ymddygiad y disgybl)

8. Reason for Referral - Wellbeing / Rheswm dros Atgyfeirio - Materion Lles:

Please provide any relevant information regarding the pupil (including appropriate background information, pupil behaviour and any safeguarding concerns) / Darparwch unrhyw gwybodaeth perthnasol ynglin a'r disgybl (gan gynnwys gwybodaeth cefndirol perthnasol, ymddygiad y disgybl ac unrhyw pryderon diogelwch perthnasol)

9. Reason for Referral – Child Missing Education / Rheswm dros Atgyfeirio – Plentyn sy'n Colli Addysg

Please provide any relevant information regarding the pupil (e.g. whereabouts if known)/ Darparwch unrhyw gwybodaeth perthnasol ynglin a'r disgybl (e.e. lleoliad os yn hysbys)

Please email completed forms to aws@rctcbc.gov.uk

For Official Use Only:	
Referral Received by:	
Referral Received on:	

Appendix 4: AWS Referral Form - Exemplar

AWS REFERRAL FORM / Ffurflen Atgyfeirio	
Date of Referral/Dyddiad Atgyfeirio:	12/02/2014
Pupil Tribal Reference Number (office use only):	

Referral made by/Atgyfeiriwyd gan:	Position/Swydd:	School/Ysgol:
Mrs. Kate Wood	Attendance Lead	Oakdale Secondary School

<RECORD START>

Previous School / Ysgol Flaenorol:	Previous School End Date / Dyddiad gadael yr ysgol flaenorol::	Date of Admission to Current School / Dyddiad Mynediad :
<School name>	<DOL>	<DOA>

1. Pupil Personal Details / Manylion Personol y Disgybl

Forename(s)/ Enw(au) Cyntaf	Joseph Charles		Surname/ Cyfenw	Bloggs	
Date of Birth/ Dyddiad Geni	01/11/2000		**Gender/ Rhyw**	Male	
Address/ Cyfeiriad	1 New Street, Oakdale				
Reg / Dosb.	G	**Year/ Bl.** 9		**Eligible for FSM/ Cinio Ysgol am Ddim**	Yes
Siblings / Enwau Brodyr a Chwiorydd:	None				

Child Protection Register/ Gofrestr Amddiffyn Plant	☐	In LA Care/ Dan ofal ALI	☐
Young Carer/ Cynhaliwr Ifanc	☐	**Youth Offending Service/ Gwasanaeth Troseddu Ieuenctid**	☐
Parent In Prison / Rhiant wedi'l carcharu:	☒		☐

SEN Status/ Statws AAA	N/a	SEN Need Type/ Math o AAA	n/a

2. Parental Details / Manylion Rhieni

Name of Parent/Guardian / Enw'r rhiant/gwarcheidwad	Mrs Doris Bloggs
Contact Telephone No/ Rhif Ffôn	01234 567890
Relationship Type: (parent, grandparent etc) / Fath o perthynas (rhiant /mam-gu /tad-cu ayyb)	Mother

Name of Parent/Guardian / Enw'r rhiant/gwarcheidwad	
Contact Telephone No/ Rhif Ffôn	
Relationship Type: (parent, grandparent etc) / Fath o perthynas (rhiant /mam-gu /tad-cu ayyb)	

3. Attendance Information / Gwybodaeth Presenoldeb

Attendance Record **This academic year to date/ Y flwyddyn academaidd bresennol hyd heddiw**	% Attendance/Presenoldeb	82.7%
	Actual/Nifer	105
	Possible/Nifer Posibl	127
	% Authorised Absence/Absennol gyda chaniatâd	2.3%
	% Unauthorised Absence/Absennol heb ganiatâd	15.0%
Explanation of Authorised Absence/Esboniad o'r presenoldeb gyda chaniatâd	Sickness absence	
Reason for Use of Code 'O' / Rheswm dros ddefnyddio'r côd 'O'	Unexplained periods of absence with no reason given.	

Registration Certificate Attached / Tystysgrif Cofrestru wedi'i hatodi	☒

Other Agencies Involved/ Asiantaethau eraill sydd ynglŷn â'r achos Y/N	Learning Support	☐	School Nurse	☐	School Counselling	☐
	Behaviour Support	☒	SENAS	☐	On Track	☐
	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service	☐	Education & Child Psychology Service	☐	PLACE / Ymbarel	☐
	Other (Please describe)	☐				

4. School Action / Camau Gwithredu'r Ysgol

Details of Telephone Calls Made / Manylion Galwadau Ffôn:

Date/Dyddiad:	Contact Name / Enw'r Cyswllt	Summary of Telephone Call / Crynodeb o'r alwad Ffôn
01/11/2013	Mrs. D Bloggs	No answer
18/11/2013	Mrs D Bloggs	Parent said JB was unwell but could not provide evidence of illness
03/12/2013	Mrs D Bloggs	No answer
07/01/2013	Mrs D Bloggs	No answer

Details of Letters Sent to Parents/Guardians / Manylion y llythyron a anfonwyd at Rhieni/Gwarcheidwaid

Date/Dyddiad:	Letter Type /Math o Lythyr (E.g. %Attendance)
13/11/2013	Attendance
05/12/2013	Attendance and invitation to meeting

Dates of Meetings with Parents/Guardians / Dyddiadau Cyfarfod(ydd) gyda Rhieni/Gwarcheidwaid

Date/Dyddiad:	Reason / Rheswm

Dates of FPN Warnings Sent to Parents/Guardians / Dyddiad y rhybuddion HCB a anfonwyd I Rhieni/Gwarcheidwaid

Date/Dyddiad:	Reason / Rheswm

5. Nature of contact with referrer (including length of contact) / Natur y cyswllt gyda'r person sy'n atgyfeirio (yn cynnwys amser y cyswllt):
I am the main contact in school that xxxx refers to if there are any issues in school. I contact home on a regular basis and also attend any meetings with the family. Or; I have had contact with xxxx with regard to Attendance over a 6 month period.

6. Reasons for Referral / Rhesymau dros Atgyfeirio		
Attendance / Presenoldeb	☒	*Please complete Section 7 / Cwblhewch adran 7*
Attendance & Wellbeing / Presenoldeb a Materion Lles	☐	*Please complete Sections 7& 8 / Cwblhewch adrannau 7 & 8*
Wellbeing Only / Materion Lles yn Unig	☐	*Please complete Sections 8 / Cwblhewch adran 8*
Emergency Wellbeing (pupil not seen for at least 5 days) / Mater Lles Argyfwng (disgybl heb ei weld am oleiaf 5 diwrnod)	☐	*Please complete Sections 8 / Cwblhewch adran 8*
Child Missing Education / Plentyn sy'n Colli Addysg	☐	*Please complete Sections 9 / Cwblhewch adran 9*

7. Reason for Referral - Attendance / Rheswm dros Atgyfeirio - Presenoldeb:
Please provide any relevant information regarding the pupil (including appropriate background information and pupil's behaviour)/ Darparwch unrhyw gwybodaeth perthnasol ynglin a'r disgybl (gan gynnwys gwybodaeth cefndirol perthnasol ac

ymddygiad y disgybl)

xxxxx will visit Dad during Term Time which usually coincides with just before or just after Half Term. This results in **xxxx** being absent from school for blocks of 2+ weeks at one time. Mum does not contact the school to request holiday leave and does not inform us that **xxxx** is going away. The schools is regularly unable to contact Mum when **xxxxx** is absent and when we do leave messages we often get no reply.

Or

xxx is constantly monitored for attendance to his individual classes and to his registration periods. This is done by the Pastoral manager as he has a tendency to be late. This can be nearly every day. Parents have been contacted regarding this and have since sent in letters relating to lateness. This is explained by car issues, sickness of siblings or lateness of getting up. xxxx can be disruptive in lessons and finds it difficult to follow instruction set by the teacher.

Or

Mum came in for a meeting with the head of year in January. She requested that xxxx receives counselling as she appears to be struggling to deal with her parents' separation and her dad having a new partner. xxxx was seen by the eye to eye counsellor after a referral being made. Mrs xxxx was also advised that she needs to inform the school with information regarding any absences and to provide medical evidence for sickness absences. xxxx also has an issue with punctuality as does her brother who is an open case the the AWS service. Both pupils follow a similar attendance pattern and Mrs xxxx has been prosecuted previously for non school attendance.

---

8.   Reason for Referral - Wellbeing / Rheswm dros Atgyfeirio - Materion Lles:

Please provide any relevant information regarding the pupil (including appropriate background information, pupil behaviour and any safeguarding concerns) / Darparwch unrhyw gwybodaeth perthnasol ynglin a'r disgybl (gan gynnwys gwybodaeth cefndirol perthnasol, ymddygiad y disgybl ac unrhyw pryderon diogelwch perthnasol)

The school is part of RCT's wellbeing pilot project.
xxxx responses indicate that she has many 'negative social experiences in school' and 'low self-worth'. It is believed that poor attendance has impacted on her development of friendships and social skills.

Or

xxxx was witness to an argument in the car between Mum and boyfriend. She was upset in school due to this and was afraid of going home. She was then upset in school and asked her teacher if she was naughty, she told her teacher that her mum had told her she was naughty for telling stories about Mum in school.
During meeting with mum I asked about possibility of xxxx bringing a healthy snack for playtimes. Mum stated that her money had been stopped and couldn't buy fruit. When I asked if mum wanted any support she informed me that she was having counselling since getting pregnant. Mum suffered with post natal depression after giving birth to xxxx

Or

During meeting on 5.2.14, mum stated she kept xxxx home when she (Mum) has been ill (mum is expecting a baby) Mum also stated that xxxx doesn't want to come to school and often makes herself ill. Staff have witnessed this. Mum has concerns regarding bullying but the school have no evidence of this happening and have discussed this with mum. xxxx teacher has raised concerns regarding xxxx attainment, she is not achieving expected results and is underachieving.

Or

Xxxx has been absent since 09/07/14 and despite repeated telephone calls and texts there has been no reason for absence provided. There are no wellbeing concerns and xxxx is normally a good attender.

---

9.   Reason for Referral – Child Missing Education / Rheswm dros Atgyfeirio – Plentyn sy'n Colli Addysg

Please provide any relevant information regarding the pupil (e.g. whereabouts if known)/

Darparwch unrhyw gwybodaeth perthnasol ynglin a'r disgybl (e.e. lleoliad os yn hysbys)
xxxx has not been seen in school since Wednesday 9th July 2014, we are concerned for her wellbeing. We have heard that she has possibly moved to Devon. Or We have heard through a third party that mum has moved to Spain and taken her young daughter with her. She has not applied to any school in the area for xxxx to attend. We then heard that xxxx was in Neath with dad. We have phoned both mum and dad with no success.

Please email completed forms to aws@rctcbc.gov.uk

For Official Use Only:	
Referral Received by:	
Referral Received on:	

Appendix 5: In-Year Transfer - Flowchart

In year admissions process (pilot 2014-15 for Yrs 9/10/11 ONLY)

Initial enquiry received by school

Initial enquiry received by LA

School issues **INTENTION TO TRANSFER SCHOOL FORM** (including pupil voice) for parents/carers to complete and return to school

Parents/carers advised to contact current school for **INTENTION TO TRANSFER SCHOOL FORM**

Meeting held between current school, requested school and parent within 5 days of school receiving completed **INTENTION TO TRANSFER SCHOOL FORM** from parent. If parent does not attend, meeting still goes ahead between the two schools to ensure information exchange. **INTENTION TO TRANSFER SCHOOL FORM** signed by current school and returned to the LA

Completed INTENTION TO TRANSFER SCHOOL FORM received by Admissions Team:
Log details and issue reference number
Check capacity of receiving school
Notify the Attendance and Wellbeing Service
Issue Admissions Form

Applications processed within 15 school days

Reason for transfer is house move or LAC placement

Reason for transfer is not house move

Pupil information gathered from Services and contact made by AWO / YRO

Admissions form received

Issues not resolved and Admissions form received

Issues resolved – request withdrawn

Request upheld

Information considered by relevant Officers at In Year Admissions Panel

Concerns referred to Service Director on grounds of:
Safeguarding
Best interest of young person

All documentation made available to receiving school

Parents contacted

Receiving school contacts parents to arrange admission

Pupil starts school

AWS checks pupil is attending receiving school and instructs LA to transfer pupil to new school roll

Appendix 6: In-Year Transfer – Intention to Transfer Form

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC – Education and Lifelong Learning
INTENTION TO TRANSFER SCHOOL FORM

For pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 wishing to transfer to another secondary school within Rhondda Cynon Taf, this form must be fully completed, signed by your child's current Headteacher at a school meeting which you will be invited to attend and returned to the Local Authority's School Admissions Team. Upon receipt of the form, the School Admissions Team will provide a final form for completion.

Changing Secondary schools is a serious step for your child(ren) to take. Parents/Carers should note, however, that curriculum option choices and examination syllabuses vary from school to school and it may not be possible for your child's choices to be met at a different school. This may prove particularly problematic for those pupils leading up to examinations such as those who are due to sit GCSEs.

All Sections MUST be completed

Section A – Pupil Details

Surname:	
First and Middle Names:	
Address:	
Post Code:	
Contact Telephone Number:	
Date of Birth:	
Parent/Guardian Name:	
Relationship with Pupil:	
Current School:	

Section B – Requested Transfer Date
When is the place required for (date):   ____/____/_____

Section C – School Preferences
Please list up to three preferred schools in priority order below:

First Preference	
Second Preference	
Third Preference	

Section D – Key Stage 4 Subject Options (if applicable)
If your child has chosen their Key Stage 4 subject options, please state these below giving as much detail as possible (including awarding body). ***Please note, the receiving school cannot guarantee to provide the same options as the current schoo****l:*

Is the transfer a result of a house move: (please circle)   **Yes**   **No**
If no please complete Section D onwards
If yes, please complete Section E onwards

Section E – Reasons for Transfer

You are invited to include additional information (or if you prefer, attach separate sheets/document) in support of your application below:

Please note that we may contact your child's current school and/or other Local Authority support services for further information in connection with your application. As a result you may be contacted by support services directly.

Section F – Pupil View

Pupils are invited to complete this section to provide information on how they feel about the move and any additional support they feel they would need to successfully transfer to the new school:

Parent Declaration

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information I have given is correct. I understand that if false information is provided any offers of school places will be withdrawn.	
Signature:	
Date:	

Headteacher Declaration

I certify that appropriate intervention has been provided in an attempt to maintain the pupil's placement. I will ensure that all relevant information regarding the pupil will be provided to the receiving school prior to the pupil commencing their placement.	
Signature:	
Date:	

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC will process the information you have provided on this form in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any amendments to that Act. Any personal information will be held in confidence with only the necessary people able to see or use it. The people who may receive the information you provide include: the current school (if any), the school to which the pupil is to be admitted and any organisation, including other Council departments, legitimately investigating allegations of fraud, other criminal offences or child protection. Please note that the information you provide may also be crosschecked and verified against information held by other Council departments. The information may be used in an anonymous form for statistical purposes.

Return this form to: School Admissions, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, CF45 4UQ
If you have not heard about the outcome of your application within 10 School days of receiving acknowledgement of receipt, please contact School Admissions on 01443 744232.

Appendix 7: Wellbeing Notification Form

WELLBEING NOTIFICATION FORM / FFURFLEN HYSBYSIAD - LLES

Date of Notification / Dyddiad yr Hysbysiad	
Pupil Tribal Reference Number (office use only)	

Notification made by/ Hysbysiad gan:	**Position/Swydd:**	**Contact Details / Manylion Cyswllt:**

1. Young Person Personal Details / Manylion Personol y Disgybl

Forename(s)/ Enw(au) Cyntaf		**Surname/ Cyfenw**	
Date of Birth / Dyddiad Geni		**Gender/ Rhyw**	
Address / Cyfeiriad			
School / Ysgol		**Year/ Bl.**	
Siblings / Enwau Brodyr a Chwiorydd			

Gypsy / Traveller Sipsiwn / Teithiwr	☐	**Parent In Prison / Rhiant wedi'i garcharu:**	☐
Young Carer/ Cynhaliwr Ifanc	☐	**Pregnant / Teenage Parent Disgwyl babi / rhiant yn ei arddegau**	☐
Placed in RCT from Out of County for fostering / adoption/ Wedi symud i RhCT o leoliad y tu allan i'r sir ar gyfer maethu/mabwysiadu	☐		

Name of Parent/Guardian / Enw'r rhiant/gwarcheidwad	
Contact Telephone No / Rhif Ffôn	

Please email completed forms to aws@rctcbc.gov.uk
Llenwch y ffurflen a'i hanfon i presenoldeballes@rctcbc.gov.uk

Appendix 8: CSCJES Self Evaluation/Audit Tool

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SELF-EVALUATION AUDIT TOOL FOR USE IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF SCHOOLS

This self evaluation checklist is an important tool to help identify issues within school and to target and prioritise action to improve attendance. It will be important to try a range of possible strategies to guarantee that improvement is secured.

Please allocate a colour - Red, Amber or Green to each of the following questions and statements.

Red = inadequate and immediate action required.
Amber = satisfactory but requires further work.
Green = Good; standards achieved.

Where green has been allocated, please ensure that this is reviewed regularly to ensure status is maintained.

Where you have allocated either amber or red please provide a comment as to action(s) you will undertake to address issues highlighted.

This kind of approach is fundamental in order to assess and review the school's capacity to improve and much rests on these types of judgments. Please ensure you have clear evidence for your evaluation.

School	
School staff member completing form	
Designation	
System Leader	
Date	

PERFORMANCE

				Actions/Areas for Improvement
Attendance Target 2012-13				
Attendance % for 2012-13				
Attendance Target 2013-14				
Current Attendance %				
FSM Quartile				
Is attendance a priority for school improvement and included in the school's Improvement Plan?	No		Yes	

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

				Actions/Areas for Improvement
Does the school have a designated SLT member of staff responsible for attendance?	No		Yes	
Does the attendance lead ensure early identification of and intervention and support for pupils with attendance issues?				
Is there dedicated time and resources allocated for attendance?				
How well does the attendance lead ensure consistent application of the policy's principles throughout the school?				
How well does the attendance lead oversee the accuracy of the recording of attendance and registration practices?				
Does the attendance lead monitor, analyse and address key issues identified?				
Does the lead ensure all relevant staff with registration responsibilities are trained and practice monitored to ensure high standard?				

				Actions/Areas for Improvement
Type? Frequency? Monitoring of training?				
Are all staff with registration responsibilities aware of the attendance codes – is info easily available in school?				
Does the outcome from monitoring ensure that interventions are focused/used appropriately/ having an impact?				

THE ATTENDANCE POLICY

	🟥	🟧	🟩	Actions/Areas for Improvement
Does the school policy/strategy for improving attendance identify the roles of staff and procedures to be followed?				
Is attendance as a cross cutting theme fully integrated into other policy areas e.g. safeguarding?				
How clear are policies & procedures for working with parents/carers, school based staff/AWS and other outside agencies?				
Is the attendance policy and practice monitored rigorously and its impact measured? How?				
Do governors oversee this monitoring process? Is the effectiveness of interventions monitored regularly?				

MANAGING ATTENDANCE

	🟥	🟧	🟩	Actions/Areas for Improvement
Is there an escalation of interventions which are used systematically and the impact of these interventions is widely known?				
Is effective pupil tracking in place to identify any pupil whose attendance begins to slip? How is it used?				

				Actions/Areas for Improvement
How effectively does the school make sure it knows the whereabouts of all pupils every day for safeguarding purposes?				
Do you have differentiated responsibilities amongst school staff for dealing with pupils with different attendance levels – i.e. form tutors dealing with 92%+, HOY/Deputy Head targeting 86-91% etc?				
Does the school offer an appropriate balance of support and challenge to parents/carers				
Does the school have reintegration strategies for those returning long term absences in which all appropriate staff participate?				
Do you robustly implement Children Missing Education procedures – ie School checklist, referral to AWS which can help limit absences on pupil records?				

COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

				Actions/Areas for Improvement
Do Governors and SLT review attendance data on a regular basis and across identified groups?				
Are Attendance related issues discussed weekly by SLT and termly by the governing body and school council?				
Is school data analysed to inform reasons for absence, profile of persistent absence, identification of vulnerable groups and links to standards?				

Appendix 9: Code Use for Common RCT Courses and Activities

EXCEPTIONS	Code	SIMS Notes Field Exemplar
Music Exams	B	Music Exam. Letter provided & copied
Speech & Language Therapy	B	SALT Letter provided & Copied
Asthma Clinic	M	Asthma Clinic. Appointment card copied
Physiotherapy	M	Physiotherapy Appointment card copied
Sporting Tours	C	Tour (E.g. Rugby) and date. Evidence copied
Football Academy (With classroom learning)	B	E.g. Cardiff Academy with classroom. Letter copied
Football Academy (Without Classroom learning)	C	E.g. Swansea Academy. Letter copied
Club & National Competitions	P	Activity / Competition, Place and Date. Letter copied
Overseas Trips through Competitions	P	Activity / Competition, Place and Date. Letter copied
Travelling Time to Competitions (With letter from the Club)	C	Travelling to (Place Name) for competition . Letter copied
E-learning where there is an agreed package with the L.A	B	E-learning. Evidence Letter copied.
Child Performance	C	Child Performance. Evidence with L.A.
Year 11 post exam codes (no study leave)	C	

* Any evidence provided to support code usage must be retained by school

Appendix 10: Data Response Visit Template

RHONDDA CYNON TAF
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING
ATTENDANCE AND WELLBEING SERVICE

PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE DATA RESPONSE VISIT

School		Headteacher	
Date of visit		AWS staff	Claire Jones Team Leader

2012-2013	% att		Target		Diff		Rank	
2013-2014	% att		Target		Diff		Rank	

Coding issues (data report)	L	B	D	P	V	J	W	C	F	H	I	M	-
	S	E	R	T	N	O	G	U	X	Y	Z	Λ	

Coding issues (reg check)	L	B	D	P	V	J	W	C	F	H	I	M	-
	S	E	R	T	N	O	G	U	X	Y	Z	Λ	

	N1	N2	R	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
No. under 86%									
No. referrals to AWS									
No. open cases									
Other issues									

Tracking and monitoring	
Action agreed	
First Day response	

Whole school approach	
Action agreed	
Communication with parents	
Action agreed	
Engaging with AWS	
Action agreed	
Collaborative work with cluster	
Action agreed	

Signed AWS		**Signed HT**	
Date for review			

Appendix 11: Further Information

Useful contacts:

Attendance and Wellbeing Service
Education & Lifelong Learning
Ty Trevithick
Abercynon
Mountain Ash
RCT
CF45 4UQ

AWS Service Manager
Name: Jessica Allen
Tel: 01443 744298
Email: jessica.allen@rctcbc.gov.uk

Team Leader *(CME and Wellbeing)*
Name: Kimberley-Bowditch Jones
Tel: 01443 744054
Email: Kimberley.L.Bowditch-jones@rctcbc.gov.uk

Team Leader *(Prosecution and FPNs)*
Name: Claire Jones
Tel: 01443 744188
Email: Claire.Jones@rctcbc.gov.uk

Team Leader *(Safeguarding and Child Licensing)*
Name: Elaine Howells
Tel: 01443 744045
Email: Elaine.Howells@rctcbc.gov.uk

Administrative Officer
Name: Tami Davies
Tel: 01443 744298
Email: Tami.L.Davies@rctcbc.gov.uk

Useful publications:

The following legislation, guidelines and documents underpin the information and guidance contained in this toolkit:

- Education Act 1996
- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- SEN Code of Practice for Wales 2004
- The Learning Country and Learning Country II: Vision into Action, WAG (2006)
- School Effectiveness Framework
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services in Wales, WAG (2005)
- Children and Young People's Workforce Development Strategy
- Behaving and Attending: Action Plan Responding to the National Behaviour and Attendance Review, WAG (2009)
- Inclusion and Pupil Support, WAG Circular 47/2006
- Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units, WAG Circular 001/2004
- Improving Attendance 2006, Estyn
- Education (Admission of Looked After Children) (Wales) Regulations 2009
- Services for children and young people with emotional and mental health needs, Wales Audit Office and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, 2009
- All Wales Attendance Framework. An operating toolkit for the Education Welfare Service, WAG 2011
- All Wales Attendance Analysis Framework, WG, 2011
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010.