

GELLISWICK CHURCH IN WALES VC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Gelliswick Road, Hakin, Milford Haven, SA73 3RS

01646 692894; admin.gelliswick@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Head teacher: Mrs L Prevel head.gelliswick@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.gelliswickschool.co.uk/>



27th September 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

Supporting Pupil Attendance

As we end our fourth week of school, I would like to draw your attention to your child's attendance so far this term. If your child's attendance is below 94%, you will be sent a copy of their attendance to date, next week. As you are aware, attendance is a huge focus for our school and we need your help to maintain, and where necessary, improve your child's attendance at school. To make the biggest difference in moving forward your child's learning, we need them in school. Last year's attendance at Gelliswick was 89.66%. Our attendance so far this year is 91.94%. Today 43 children were absent from school, with parents of 20 of those children not informing the school of the reason for their absence.

	School Target	Actual Attendance	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
2023-24 (All pupils)	95%	89.66%	5.67%	4.66%
2023-24 (Y1-6)	95%	90.45%	5.48%	4.08%
2023-24 (Nurs to Rec)	95%	86.81%	6.34%	6.79%

Whole school attendance improved in 2023-24 by 0.24% from 89.42% to 89.66%. For a small proportion of pupils, attendance on a Friday morning was also a concern. Attendance on Friday is notably lower than other weekdays and has declined this year.

	Gelliswick School Attendance by day				
Year	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2023-24	90.48%	91.73%	91.22%	90.77%	85.59%
2022-23	90.19%	91.84%	92.01%	91.79%	87.41%

In 2023-24 the gap between the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM), who access the school essentials grant, and those who are non-eFSM, closed slightly. This, along with the attendance of learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is an area of focus for Estyn, the school inspectorate body. Inspectors will look at the number of pupils who have attendance rates well below those of others in the school, especially those with attendance rates below **85% (the legal requirement)**. Welsh Government now class anything under 90% as persistent absence. Estyn will look to see if pupils arrive at school and lessons punctually and gauge whether pupils understand the consequences of poor attendance.

Year	eFSM attendance	Non-eFSM attendance	Boys' attendance	Girls' attendance
2023-24	88.38%	90.20%	88.68%	90.20%
2022-23	86.96%	90.49%	89.38%	89.98%

Important changes to registration

Gelliswick School runs an asymmetric week, which was implemented to create regular training opportunities for staff in order to develop the curriculum and support their professional learning to improve teaching and learning, to continue to

raise standards and achievement. Since the change, there has also been an increase in the teaching time for all pupils over the whole week, with longer sessions Monday – Thursday. When the asymmetric week launched in September 2019, the school was advised by the Local Authority to record pupil attendance over 9 sessions per week (4 x 2 sessions, Monday to Thursday AM and PM, and once on a Friday morning = 9 per week). The Local Authority and Welsh Government have now requested that schools who run an asymmetric week take two registration sessions on a Friday (5 x 2 registrations = 10 per week). If your child does not come to school on a Friday morning, instead of their absence being recorded as 11.1% for the week, it will now be recorded as 20% of the week absent for your child. This change, and the lower attendance on Fridays will decrease your child's attendance figure, as well as the school figures if they are not present on a Friday.

Holiday requests

There is an increased number of holidays being taken during term time by families. Last year (2023-24), pupils missed 2778 sessions for holidays, which equates to 1.82% of our total absence. Holidays in term time will not be authorised (unless there are very exceptional circumstances).

Punctuality

If your child has any U marks, it means that they have missed the close of the register and the whole session must be marked as absent. Children persistently arriving late is a concern for the school. Teachers start teaching promptly after the register, so learning time is interrupted by those few pupils who arrive late. Pupils with additional learning needs may also miss out on their support programs, which are often held first thing in the morning. Important instructions and notices are given in the mornings, and these are also missed. If your child is 10-15 minutes late, they may miss their mental maths session or the teaching of the 'letter/sound' of the day. On a day that we have assembly, a child who is late walks into assembly where the whole school sees their late arrival. Children tell us that arriving late can leave them feeling confused and embarrassed.

Your child's rights

At Gelliswick, our children learn about their rights under the UNCRC. We want to share with you how these rights link to good school attendance in several ways:

Right to Education: Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), every child has the right to a free and compulsory primary education. Regular school attendance is essential to fulfilling this right, ensuring that all children have access to the knowledge and skills they need for their development. Students with regular attendance are more likely to achieve higher grades. For instance, those with the highest attendance rates tend to perform better in GCSE and A Level exams. Each day missed means missing out on important lessons and learning opportunities. This can lead to gaps in knowledge and understanding, making it harder for students to keep up with their peers. Regular attendance is crucial for developing essential skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Missing school can hinder the development of these foundational skills - especially true in our lower school, where children are learning new letters and sounds every day.

Equal Opportunities: Consistent attendance helps ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to succeed. This aligns with the principle of non-discrimination, which is a core aspect of children's rights.

Holistic Development: Education is not just about academic learning; it also supports the social, emotional, and physical development of children. Regular attendance not only boosts academic performance but also supports a child's overall development, including social skills and emotional well-being.

Protection from Harm: Schools provide a safe environment where children can learn and grow. Regular attendance helps protect children from risks such as exploitation, neglect, and abuse, which can be more prevalent when children are not in school.

Voice and Participation: Attending school regularly gives children the opportunity to express their views, participate in decision-making processes, and engage in activities that affect their lives. This is in line with the right to be heard and to participate in matters that concern them.

Parents' role in improving attendance

At Gelliswick, we aim to reduce the amount of missed education as much as possible. We believe that our school community is stronger together, with all our pupils in school every day and arriving on time, so they can achieve the best possible outcomes.

We know that you can have a significant effect on your child's attendance, and we would really appreciate your help and support in ensuring that your child comes to school every day and arrives on time. We understand that every family's situation is unique, and we want to work with you to achieve this. Please contact the school to speak with Ms. Emma Evans, Mrs. Tracey Awcock, or Mrs. Jaclyn Hadley if you need any support for you or your child.

The impact of poor school attendance on children's learning, social and emotional development and ultimately their future successes is hard hitting and a huge worry for us as a school. As we plan and deliver exciting learning experiences to support your child's development, we see the day-to-day impact that missing school has on our learners. This is what they say about missing school and arriving late:

- *"If I am 20 mins late, I feel worried about missing literacy and I don't know what is happening in the day."*
- *"Missing school makes me feel sad and worried."*
- *"One day the taxi didn't come at all - I felt angry."*
- *"If I'm late everyone has a pencil and book out when I arrive. I feel rushed and unsettled."*
- *"I am worried about missing a task."*
- *"I am worried about my attendance and that I am not going to make the register."*
- *"I am scared about interrupting other learners."*
- *"If I'm late I have to rush and get out of breath."*
- *"I went home after lunch, I was sad because I wasn't in school making a game."*
- *"I don't understand the learning that everyone else is doing because I've missed the teaching."*

Our children tell us many reasons why they don't come to school. What our children have said about why they don't come to school:

- *"I have to stay at home to look after my mum."*
- *"I get sick on a Friday sometimes."*
- *"Sometimes my parents don't mind if I don't go to school."*
- *"My parents just don't want to get up."*
- *"I have to look after my brother and sister because my mum is in bed."*

Fixed Penalty notices

If your child's attendance causes us concern, please expect contact from the school. If your child is repeatedly absent due to illness, we may ask you to provide medical evidence. In order to support our pupils' attendance at school and ensure that they have every opportunity to develop, progress and achieve, we will be issuing fixed penalty notices to support children to ensure that their attendance improves. Please see the letter from Pembrokeshire County Council about fixed penalty notices.

I trust that we will work together to ensure the best attendance at school for your child. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of any support.

Yours sincerely,

Leanne Prevel, Headteacher



Penalty Notices

This letter alerts you to the use of penalty notices for unauthorised absences from school.

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

A penalty notice is an available option with the aim of seeking to secure an improvement in the pupil's attendance. A penalty notice can be requested by a Head teacher, their authorised deputy or assistant head teacher, the police and neighbouring local authorities.

If a notice has been requested and the relevant checklist has been completed by PCC, should PCC accept the request the parent will receive a formal written warning notifying them that they may receive a penalty notice and providing a period of 15 school days to allow the parent to respond. During the 15 days, parents would have the right to provide any evidence they may wish to present to the school, including medical evidence, to argue that the penalty notice should not be issued. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent, it will be for the Head teacher/authorised person in the school to determine whether the evidence is accepted, and the register amended.

If evidence is not provided or the Head teacher/authorised person does not accept the evidence, then the Head teacher should notify PCC and a penalty notice can be issued by PCC by first class post.

- If payment of £60 is made within 28 days of receipt of the notice, there will be no further action.
- If the payment of £60 is not made within 28 days of receipt of the notice, the penalty rises to £120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days of receipt of the notice.
- If payment of £120 is made within 42 days of receipt of the notice, there will be no further action.
- If payment is not made pursuant to the notice, then the notice will either be withdrawn or the offence will be prosecuted under Education Act 1996 section 444.

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

www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/schoolattendance