

Improving Attendance

Name of school / partnership: Willowbrook Primary School

Name of lead person: Steve Davies

Role of lead person: Headteacher

Local authority(ies): Cardiff

Phase(s): Primary

Context and background

Willowbrook Primary School is located in St Mellons in Cardiff. There are currently 352 full-time and 64 part-time pupils on roll. 26.4% of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

The school's last inspection was in 2013. The school was judged to be 'good' in all areas with the exception of wellbeing which was judged to be 'adequate'. The reason for this judgement was, "The school's overall attendance rate last year was just over 92%. This placed the school in the bottom 25% when compared with similar schools. Attendance has placed it in the lower 50% or bottom 25% for the last four years."

Nature of strategy or activity

Overall attendance is one of the responsibilities of the deputy headteacher, and since this time the school has been working extremely hard to improve attendance. The following proactive measures have been put in place at different times over the last three years:

- The school uses a teaching assistant as a school liaison officer between the hours of 8.55am and 10.30am daily. The school liaison officer's first task of the day is to log the names of any pupils who arrive late for school. Teachers, after having completed the register using SIMS, note down the names of any pupils who are absent from school that day in a First Response Books. The books are taken to the school liaison officer promptly at 9.30am every day and the school liaison officer contacts all parents/carers of all pupils who are absent – if they haven't already notified school of the reason for the absence.
- The deputy headteacher provides the school liaison officer with a register (updated weekly) of the pupils whose attendance has dropped below 95%. The deputy headteacher is then notified on a daily basis of any pupils whose attendance is below 95% and who are absent again. One of the following actions is taken – first letters are sent to parents, teacher welfare meetings are arranged, meetings are organised between the deputy headteacher and the parent or referrals are made to the school

attendance officer. Rigorous implementation of this practice has been instrumental in improving attendance by 0.9% for the first two terms of this year compared to last year.

- On a fortnightly basis, whole school attendance data from SIMS is uploaded on to a tracking system. The data uploaded includes the attendance percentage for the previous two weeks and breaks down any reasons for absence. The deputy headteacher meets fortnightly with the SAO to monitor the attendance of all pupils whose attendance is below 95%. The reasons for any absences have been investigated thoroughly prior to the meeting.
- Attendance is featured in the monthly newsletter to parents. A termly attendance newsletter is produced which highlights the high priority and focus placed on attendance at the school.
- An 'Attendance Matters' display board is a notable feature for visitors/parents/guardians as they enter the school. The display orders classes from the highest attending class to the lowest attending class on a weekly basis. The number of pupils with 100% attendance is also included on the board as is the number of late arrivals.
- Attendance is celebrated in a weekly assembly. The highest attending class in each phase is awarded with a trophy to retain in their classroom for the duration of the week. The names of pupils with 100% attendance each week are placed in a draw and there are two winners from each phase of the school.
- In order to train children in the expectation of high attendance, children from Reception classes are rewarded for 100% attendance with small prizes.
- Classes whose attendance falls below 95% are targeted by the deputy headteacher. They are provided with a poster/chart on which they are able to record and monitor daily absences.
- We hold termly 100% attendance days. We link the day to a significant day in school and promote 100% to the children and parents.

Impact on provision, learning and teaching and/or leadership

The impact for our school has been that attendance has improved consistently year on year as the table below indicates.

Central South Consortium

Case Study

Year	Whole-school Attendance (%)
2012/13	92.2%
2013/14	93.4%
2014/15	94.6%
2015/16	94.8%

Willowbrook Primary School's attendance target for the 2016–17 academic year is 95%. By implementing the strategies outlined in this case study the school's current attendance, two terms into the school year, is at 95.9%.

Where is the effective practice recognised?

Gareth Dacey - CSC Challenge Adviser