



**ROBERT A. SULLY**  
B.Sc., C.Eng., C.Env., M.I.C.E., M.C.M.I., M.I.o.D.

Cyfarwyddwr  
Adran Addysg a Phlant  
Neuadd y Sir, Caerfyrddin SA31 1JP

Director  
Department for Education and Children  
County Hall, Carmarthen SA31 1JP

Ffôn • Tel :

01267 234567

e-bost • e-mail :

[educationwelfare@sirgar.gov.uk](mailto:educationwelfare@sirgar.gov.uk)

*Eich cyf • Your ref :*

*Fy nghyf • My ref :* C/RAS/BTJ/HW

*Dyddiad • Date :* 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2013

*Gofynner am • Please ask for :* Education Welfare Service

*Llinell Uniongyrchol • Direct Line:* 01267 234567

Dear Parent/Carer,

### School Attendance

My open letter to parents and carers in September 2013 reinforcing the importance of regular school attendance to children's educational development has been largely welcomed. However, some parents have sought clarification on some related issues.

Upon reflection I acknowledge that perhaps we could have done more to explain the detail associated with elements of the expectations around school attendance and I apologise if this has caused unnecessary concern. I am pleased to issue this second letter to offer clarification on the issues that have been raised with us.

There is no question that children must access all medical, dental or other professional health or well-being care that they need. What we are asking parents to do is to consider carefully how these important services are accessed. In particular we ask parents to make every effort to avoid removing children from school for non-urgent routine appointments.

By routine appointments we refer to periodic assessments such as dental check-ups, occasional optical examinations, non-urgent doctor consultations, etc, where parents/guardians are able to influence the timing of appointments. Many medical and dental practices offer convenient times for such appointments outside school hours and we are simply seeking the cooperation of parents/carers to arrange such visits wherever possible outside school hours to limit the impact on the education of children, whilst ensuring that children receive all the medical or dental or other support that they require.

It will, of course, be the case that some children will require treatment by doctors or other health professionals in settings such as hospitals, orthodontic practices, etc, where it is not possible for parents/carers to control the timing of appointments and in these circumstances the children must attend as required. The health and well-being of children is paramount. In such cases, the absence will be authorised when the parent/carers presents the appointment card or letter to the school.

The Education Act 1996 establishes that children are of compulsory school age between the ages of 5 and 16 years, subject to the following:

- A child becomes of compulsory school age on the first day of term after his/her 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The first day of term may be:

- in September on the day schools re-open after the Summer holidays;
- in January on the first day schools re-open after the Christmas holidays, or
- in April on the first day schools re-open after the Easter holidays.

- A child ceases to be of compulsory school age:

- On the last Friday in June if they have had their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday on or before this date, or
- On the last day of the academic year in July if the child's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday falls after the last Friday in June.

Children in Carmarthenshire benefit from a school education at a much earlier age than that of the statutory requirement. Whilst legislation applies strictly only to children of statutory school age we believe that the principles regarding the regular attendance of children in school apply equally to all children and so we ask for the cooperation of all parents/carers in maximising school attendance, as this is demonstrably in the interests of children.

A small number of parents/carers have advised us that they have booked holidays prior to the announcement of the change in policy. In these circumstances we accept that parents/carers have acted in good faith and so I am pleased to confirm that if parents/carers present evidence to the school of the booking made prior to the release of the initial letter then the school will authorise the absence on this occasion.

The Authority has implemented these changes in line with Welsh Government policy to ensure that children have the best possible opportunity to attain their potential and are not missing out on school unnecessarily. If you have concerns about your child's attendance or require any help or advice please don't hesitate to contact your local school.

I hope that you find the foregoing information of value and I look forward to your continued cooperation in ensuring that all children in Carmarthenshire benefit to the maximum extent possible from their education in our schools.

Yours sincerely,

R. A. Sully  
**Director of Education and Children's Services**