

POLICY FOR THE EDUCATION OF PREGNANT SCHOOL GIRLS AND SCHOOL AGE PARENTS

Education Inclusion Service

**Policy for the Education of
Pregnant School Girls and
School Age Parents**

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Education Inclusion Services

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Introduction

This policy has been developed to support pregnant schoolgirls and teenage parents in continuing their education. It outlines the responsibilities of the local authority and schools and the need to ensure adequate support and safeguarding arrangements and child protection procedures are in place. It is essential that all agencies work together to provide a co-ordinated support package for the young person.

The legislative framework:

This policy is cognisant of the 2016 Welsh Government Pupil Support and Inclusion Guidance as well as the Protocol from All Wales Child Protection Procedure which in accordance with the Sexual Offences Act 2003 states that:

- Children under the age of 13 are of insufficient age to give consent to sexual activity;
- For young people aged between 13 and 16 whilst mutually agreed, non-exploitive sexual activity between teenagers does take place, the age of consent should still remain at 16. This acknowledges that this group of young people is still vulnerable, even though they do not view themselves as such; and,
- For young people over the age of 16 but under the age of 18 consideration needs to be given to sexual exploitation and abuse of power and where appropriate a referral needs to be made.

In any of the above circumstances a member of staff receiving the disclosure should not promise to maintain confidentiality and should share the information with the schools Designated Safeguarding Officer who will then determine the most appropriate course of action, which in the case of children under the age of 13 will involve an automatic child protection referral.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 removed the exemption that previously applied to schools about bringing discrimination cases on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity. This means that pupils should not be excluded because of their pregnancy or be required to study at home or in an alternative provision when they wish to remain in school. Pupils must also be allowed to return to school once they have had their babies.

The responsibilities of the local authority

The local authority has a statutory duty to provide suitable education for all pupils who reside in the local authority and ensure all learners are kept safe. This includes pregnant schoolgirls and young parents.

Child Protection

In line with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019):

When a girl under the age of 13 is known to be pregnant, an immediate referral to Social Services **MUST** be made.

Any staff member in a school setting who becomes aware that a girl is pregnant must inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Officer who will determine the most appropriate course of action and ensure appropriate support and safeguarding arrangements are in place. Further advice may be sought from the Safeguarding in Education Manager, Sarah Dixon (01495 356016 / 07815 005241).

Any professional in any learning setting in Blaenau Gwent must not assure confidentiality to a young person, under the age of 18. Appropriate safeguarding and child protection procedures must take precedence. The duty of confidentiality is not absolute and must not be assured or guaranteed.

Any decisions regarding disclosure must be justified according to the particular facts of the case and guidance and documented accordingly. Advice should be sought in cases of doubt from Social Services, Information, Advice and Assistance team.

The responsibilities of the schools

When a school becomes aware that a pupil on their roll is pregnant they should follow the Child Protection guidance and safeguarding arrangements as set out in this policy. The school must also make sure that the pupil is made aware of local services and how to access them.

The school should inform the school's Education Welfare Officer so that appropriate support can be put in place. This support could include counselling, youth service projects or Families First. The head teacher will ensure that the pupil is able to continue with their education and that teachers and other pupils deal with the pregnancy sensitively.

A meeting should be arranged in school to complete a risk assessment, to develop a pre and post-natal plan and look at what multi-agency support might be needed. This may include counselling if the young mum wants to talk about her situation and options. Awareness is needed of the reaction of other pupils to the pregnancy and the support structure that may be needed for the young mum regarding this. Childcare arrangements should form part of the meeting. The risk assessment will need to be reviewed every trimester.

The Youth Service are able to support the young mum using the Baby Think It Over (BTIO) programme to help develop the young mum's confidence and skills (also dads). Other ways in which the Youth Service could provide support should also be explored.

It is good practice for schools to identify a designated person to have responsibility for school age parents so that they can oversee the young person's educational and pastoral support needs. This could be the Designated Officer for

Safeguarding in the setting. It should be noted that pregnancy is not a reason for exclusion.

School Attendance

The pregnant school girl is expected to attend school as regularly and punctually as her pregnancy allows as she is still a child of compulsory school age. Where necessary the pupil should be allowed out of class to rest during the day.

Pregnant schoolgirls and expectant young fathers are entitled to attend ante-natal classes. These absences should be authorised and code 'C' must be used for registration purposes.

A schoolgirl who becomes pregnant is entitled to up to 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth. It would also be reasonable to authorise two weeks' paternity leave for the expectant father following the birth. Code 'C' must be used for registration purposes for both young mum and dad.

The school should consider how they can best support the pupil's education during the period of maternity leave, for example by sending work home.

After the period of maternity leave, the young mother should return to the school at which she is on roll. There may be instances when it is agreed, in consultation with the pupil and her parents/carers that a return to mainstream education would not be in her best interests. In this situation the school are advised to seek guidance from the Inclusion Service.

Breastfeeding has a strong protective effect on the health of the mother and baby. It is important that schools support the student's choice to breastfeed. If the childcare is close to the school, the pupil should be allowed to leave at agreed times or arrangements made for the baby to be brought into school. The school should identify a private area to enable the student to express milk and provide suitable facilities to store milk during the school day.

Young parents are also entitled to some time off to care for their baby in the case of illness. Absence in this instance should be classified as 'authorised' for the mum or the dad. However, should this be an ongoing issue it would be advisable to contact the allocated EWO to discuss what support is available.

Supporting Young Parents

Schools should be supportive of both parents, acknowledging the additional needs that school age fathers and fathers-to-be have. In some cases, the parents may attend the same school. Schools may need to consider offering counselling or additional support to the father as appropriate.

Childcare

The availability of childcare facilities should be taken into account when considering options. Lack of appropriate or affordable childcare provision can prove to be a significant barrier to participation in education. The Family Information Service can provide advice to the young parents about accessing childcare. Families where both grandparents are working, or where a lone grandparent works, may be eligible for the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit for the childcare of their grandchild while they are claiming child benefit for that child. Further information about Working Tax Credit is available by calling 0345 300 3900.

Provided that appropriate education and free childcare facilities are available, any pupil who still fails to attend education will be liable to the same legal action as any other pupil. Where there are childcare problems the young parent should contact the designated Education Welfare Officer to see whether there are alternative educational arrangements that could be made.

Wherever possible, pregnant schoolgirls and young parents will continue their education in mainstream settings. However, where there are medical or psychological difficulties preventing this then an alternative placement or part-time education will be considered.

Appendix 1

School Risk Assessment - Example

To be completed by schools educating a pregnant schoolgirl

Extra-curricular school visits and events necessitate a separate risk assessment.

Young parent name:	Tutor group:	Estimated date of delivery:
Young parent lead:	Risk assessment lead:	Current planned maternity leave date:
Risk assessment date:	Review date:	Review date:
Emergency contact numbers: Parent/Guardian emergency contact number 1 – Parent/guardian emergency contact number 2 –		
Pregnancy and coronavirus guidance: The coronavirus environment and official guidance is constantly evolving. Please see the latest NHS pregnancy and coronavirus guidance to inform your risk assessing. https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/pregnancy-and-coronaviru Your workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of Childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. As part of your risk Assessment, you should consider whether adapting duties and/or facilitating home working may be Appropriate to mitigate risks. It is recommended that schools follow the same principles for pregnant pupils, in line with their wider Health and safety obligations. From week 28 if school are unable to offer a separate room for the pupil to work in, remote learning should be offered. If it is felt that this would be unsuitable due to additional learning needs then an I needs to be completed and forwarded to the Inclusion service, along with a current risk assessment.		
Additional Notes		

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Activity or Risk	Hazard	Control Measures In place	Further Controls Measures required Y/N
Manual handling of equipment and school books/bag.	Excessive manual handling increases the potential for postural issues to arise. Risk may increase as the pregnancy progresses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pregnant schoolgirl should take particular care when moving or carrying any loads and should not presume that she is capable of moving equipment "as normal". - Reduce manual handling tasks where possible and alter the way the task is done to minimise fatigue and reduce physical stress. - Provide a locker to reduce the need to carry heavy loads. - These measures are especially important from the 28th week of pregnancy onwards. 	N
<p>Exposure to shocks, vibration, sudden movements.</p> <p>Risk of impact injuries, falls and being knocked over.</p>	<p>Regular exposure to shocks and vibrations can lead to health complications for the unborn child.</p> <p>Impact injuries, falls and being knocked over can lead to health issues for the pregnant schoolgirl and her unborn child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workstations to be assessed taking the schoolgirl's need for more space into account. - Pregnancy pass (or similar more discrete pass if appropriate) issued permitting schoolgirl to leave class five minutes early to avoid congestion in corridors and to avoid queueing for lunch. - Agreed quiet space can be accessed during break and lunch to avoid congested social areas. - Contact sports ceased. No new sports not already undertaken before pregnancy, to be started in PE. 	N

<p>School activities causing physical fatigue.</p>	<p>Fatigue caused by excessive physical exertion can lead to significant health issues for the unborn child.</p> <p>Fatigue caused by over exerting during P.E lessons or walking around a large school site with urgency and multiple flights of stairs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In discussion with the schoolgirl, adjustments to the length of school day and lessons undertaken should be under regular review. - Seating to be provided where possible and additional rest breaks should be considered. - Access to food and drink between lessons for regular snacking, a bottle of water accessible during lessons. - The amount and type of exercise a pregnant schoolgirl is able to undertake within P.E. lessons to be determined by the schoolgirl in collaboration with her P.E. teacher or identified mentor. - Pregnancy pass (or similar) issued to allow schoolgirl to leave class five minutes early so she can take her time and not rush around the school site. - Consider if a lift pass would be appropriate. 	<p>N</p>
<p>Using chemical agents during science lessons.</p>	<p>Use of chemical substances may cause ill-health to the pregnant schoolgirl and her unborn child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Normal safety practices which apply to all students will protect the pregnant schoolgirl and her unborn child. - Consider seating plan allow the schoolgirl to be sat in a well ventilated part of the classroom to minimise exposure to smoke and fumes. 	<p>N</p>
<p>Ingesting harmful foods during food</p>	<p>Ingesting foods the NHS recommends</p>	<p>Food technology teacher should be aware of the pregnancy and educated on which foods pregnant women should avoid.</p>	<p>N</p>

		- Particular care is taken to ensure the pregnant schoolgirl avoids food the NHS has recommended pregnant women avoid	
Extended use of computer equipment during lessons.	Postural issues may occur through being seated for extended periods of time.	- Workstations assessed taking into account additional needs such as more space needed and postural support. - Sufficient rest breaks to be taken away from the screen.	N
Working in extremes of hot and cold.	Pregnant schoolgirls may be more susceptible to heat stress and may generally feel more uncomfortable in extreme conditions.	- Pregnant schoolgirl not to be in areas where temperatures are especially hot or cold. - Consider additional rest and refreshment breaks.	N
Evacuation in an emergency	Pregnant schoolgirl may be injured through impact with other evacuees during evacuation.	- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan put into place, schoolgirl fully informed of plan in case of emergency. - Key staff informed of pregnancy	N
Access Arrangements to and from school.	Fatigue through travelling and risk of knocks and bumps from travelling in crowded areas.	- Schoolgirl to allow adequate travel time so no need to rush. - Consider using alternative modes of transport if appropriate - Consider travelling and arriving/leaving school before it becomes crowded.	N
Poorly fitting school uniform due to an inevitable increase in size during pregnancy.	Severe discomfort leading to adverse effects. Difficulty wearing school uniform.	- Allow comfortable clothing, ideally in school colours. - Consider if some uniform, such as a blazer, could be comfortably worn in a larger size.	N
First aid needs to be administered.	Pregnancy not taken into account during administration of first aid.	- First Aiders are discretely familiar with the pregnant schoolgirl - First Aiders and team responsible for calling an ambulance have quick access to	N

		<p>emergency contact details.</p> <p>- Pregnant schoolgirl to keep maternity notes with her throughout the school day.</p>	
Sitting exams.	<p>Increased stress and anxiety potentially causing health complications.</p> <p>Postural issues from being seated for long periods.</p>	<p>- Pregnant schoolgirl to be assessed for Exam access arrangement needs and necessary provision made.</p> <p>- Postural support should be provided.</p> <p>- Emotional support provided through a mentor or through mental health services</p>	N