

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

| Author | Date approved by Curriculum, Standards and Student Matters Committee | Date approved by full Governors (if required) | Date of next review |
|--------|--|---|---------------------|
| NJO    | March 25   |   | March 2027          |

### Introduction

1.1 At Cathays High School we recognise that excellent attendance is essential for all pupils to maximise their potential and take advantage of the opportunities that are provided for all students to grow and develop.

1.2 We also believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 Cathays High School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties that will result in a swift and sustained return to school.

1.4 At Cathays High School we recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by a number of our other policies on such issues as safeguarding, bullying, positive relationships and inclusive learning. This policy also considers the statutory obligations of the school under a number of UK and Welsh Acts and Regulations.

1.5 Cathays High School is committed to working with its partner primary schools to develop consistent and coherent approaches to encourage excellent attendance at all stages of school.

1.6 As a cluster we are committed to working in partnership with Cardiff LA, the Education Welfare Service and any other relevant agencies to develop the most effective and efficient systems for promoting excellent attendance and to address attendance issues.

### Legal Framework

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

2.6 The framework operates in conjunction with Cardiff Local Authority's Five Step System of Attendance Management.

### **Categorising absence (see attached attendance/ absence coding)**

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation or evidence for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents should advise the school by telephone before 8am on each day of absence. Where absence is known about in advance parents should contact the Head of Year with an explanation and any relevant evidence eg. a medical appointment letter.

3.4 Absence from school will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Lateness - Pupils and parents are responsible for getting to school on time. The first bell sounds at 8.25 indicating to pupils that lessons are about to start. Lessons start at 8.30am. The school gate opens at 8am for pupils who arrive earlier. Lessons start promptly. We teach our pupils that every minute of learning matters. The start of lessons is often when key content is introduced and missing this can make understanding the rest of the lesson more challenging for students. 10 minutes late every day is the equivalent of missing a whole lesson once per week. Lateness to school will be recorded on registers with either an L or a U code.

3.6 Illness - Parents must contact the school absence line with a clear description of the child's symptoms and any treatment they are receiving. Where multiple absences for illness have affected a child's attendance to school, school may ask parents to provide medical evidence. We may also offer to refer to the School Nurse. Acceptable forms of evidence include an official appointment card/letter, copy of a prescription, letter from a doctor or a doctor's note. These will be recorded on registers with the code "I"

3.7 Medical/Dental Appointments - Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day or during school holidays. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should send a copy of the appointment card to the child's Head of Year. These will be recorded on registers with the code "M".

3.8 Exceptional Circumstances - This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or a part-time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package. These will be recorded on registers with the code "C"

3.9 Excluded - Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be set via the school online learning platforms. Parents are asked to request paper-based work to be collected from reception if there is no access to a device at home. These will be recorded on registers with the code "E"

3.10 Holidays - Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school for a holiday and, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance. Taking holidays during term time has a significant impact on your child's academic and social progress. One week off for a holiday means a child misses 30 lessons of important content and skills development.

3.10.a Under the direction of the Cardiff LA, Cathays High School is unable to authorise any period of absence for a holiday and it will be coded with a "G" to mean it is an unauthorised holiday absence.

3.10.b Schools have the right to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice for holidays taken during term time. This may result in a fine. Where families have multiple children who have taken a holiday a Notice may be issued for each child.

3.10.c If a pupil fails to return from holiday and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with statutory obligations. This means that the child will lose their school place if they are absent for more than 4 weeks(20 school days).

3.11 Religious Observance - Cathays High School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of our school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. Cathays High attempts to accommodate religious festivals through the careful placement of Inset Days, to ensure that a pupils' education is the least disrupted as possible. However, it is not always possible to do this. These will be recorded on registers with the code "R"

3.11a - It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

3.11b - In line with Local Authority guidance and to limit the impact of absence on the child's progress, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any absence beyond this will be categorised as unauthorised.

3.11c - When an Inset Day has been correctly placed on the day of the religious festival then no further days' absences can be authorised.

3.12 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation or evidence as outlined in the above categories. Unauthorised absence is recorded on registers with an "o".

3.12.a Absences will be authorised for the following reasons:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

## **Using Attendance Data**

5.1 Pupils' attendance and punctuality is monitored closely and may be shared with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service and other agencies if a pupil's attendance record is a cause for concern. Attendance is recorded in sessions. There are two sessions per day. Session 1 is from the start of the day until the start of lunchtime. Session 2 is in the afternoon.

5.2 The Assistant Headteacher (Inclusion and Wellbeing) and Head of School (Pupil Inclusion and the school's named SAO) are responsible for overseeing that attendance records for each pupil are accurately maintained.

5.3 Heads of Year and Inclusion and Wellbeing Leaders check SIMS daily for missing marks on the register.

5.4 Inclusion and Wellbeing Leaders and/or Heads of Year, are the only staff members who can authorise absence. Form tutors may receive explanations or evidence of absence and should pass it to the relevant staff member for consideration.

5.5 The AHT (Inclusion and Wellbeing) and Head of School (Inclusion) meet weekly to discuss individual cases of absenteeism and reflect on the effectiveness of interventions to date.

5.6 The Head of School (Inclusion) creates a weekly report for every year group, with particular focus on groups of students who are below 97% and those who are late to school more than once within a week.

5.7 Heads of Year will meet weekly with the relevant Inclusion and Wellbeing Leader to examine attendance data for individual pupils in their year groups.

5.8 Members of the Inclusion and Wellbeing team will conduct meetings and home visits where pupils are persistently absent or late to school.

5.9 The Pastoral team will follow Cardiff LA's 5-step approach to attendance. The table on the next page explains this in more detail.

## **The 5 Stage Approach**

|                | <b>Criteria</b> | <b>Schools Response</b>  |
|----------------|-----------------|--|
| <b>Stage 1</b> | 97%             | Attendance above 97% is considered excellent. School will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- send praise texts home</li> <li>- give weekly achievements points</li> <li>- reward pupils in half-termly assemblies</li> <li>- invite pupils to termly reward experiences.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Stage 2</b> | 90-96%          | Attendance of below 97% shows an emerging concern. School will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- send texts on the first day of absence where an explanation has not been provided</li> <li>- make contact via a meeting or phone call to discuss the reasons for absence and offer support</li> <li>- Pupils will complete an attendance contract with their form tutor</li> <li>- Issue a monitoring period letter if a number of absences are unauthorised</li> <li>- Issue an FPN warning for any holidays taken</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Stage 3</b> | 81-89%          | Attendance at stage 3 is a major cause for concern. School will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- review the pupil's attendance contract</li> <li>- invite parents in for a meeting to discuss the reasons for absence and offer support</li> <li>- request that medical evidence is provided before authorising any absences for illness or medical appointments</li> <li>- make a referral to the school nurse</li> <li>- issue notice of the school's monitoring period or issue a Fixed Penalty notice if the pupil has 10 or more unauthorised sessions</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Stage 4</b> | 70-80           | Attendance at stage 3 is a significant cause for concern. School will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- continue to request that medical evidence is provided before authorising any absences for illness or medical appointments</li> <li>- visit the child and parent at home to discuss attendance and support</li> <li>- consider a referral to children's services or the police where the child has not been sighted for multiple days</li> <li>- issue a Fixed Penalty notice if 10 or more sessions are unauthorised</li> <li>- start to develop evidence for a referral to Education Welfare</li> </ul> |
| <b>Stage 5</b> | below 70%       | Attendance at stage 5 may indicate a safeguarding concern. School will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- refer to Education Welfare service which could result in prosecution.</li> </ul>  |

5.10 Letters are sent home to all parents once per term to share a pupil's attendance and encourage them to make contact if they wish to discuss the reasons their child is off school.

5.13 Where a child's attendance is below 90%, they have 10 unauthorised sessions medical evidence will be required for each absence. A meeting or telephone call will be arranged to discuss how the school can support the pupil to attend.

5.14 10 unauthorised absences within a school year or persistent lateness to school will trigger a monitoring period and parents will receive a warning letter. Failure to improve attendance during this 3 week monitoring period will result in a Fixed Penalty Notice referral being made to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in a fine issued to parents.

5.15 Where a pupil's attendance falls below 70% Cathays High School will liaise with the Education Welfare Service. The aim of this is always to work in partnership with families to improve a pupil's attendance to school. However, failure to improve attendance whilst open to the Education Welfare Service may result in prosecution. Where requested to do so, we will provide the evidence required to prosecute parents who fail, without reasonable justification, to cause their child to attend school regularly, under sections 444(1) and 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

## **Support Systems**

6.1 Cathays High School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/ or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

6.2 Cathays High School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, new arrivals and children that are looked after.

6.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. We will always try to identify the barriers to attendance and put in place strategies to overcome them. Strategies may include:

- Restorative approaches such as restorative meetings
- Form tutor reflections for lateness are opportunities for pupils' to discuss punctuality and request support
- Referrals to support agencies eg. school nurse, ALN specialists
- Signposting to agencies for financial, housing or social support
- Interventions eg literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, social skills
- School-based counselling
- Personalised reward systems
- Reintegration support packages.