

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Author	Date approved by Curriculum, Standards and Student Matters Committee	Date approved by full Governors (if required)	Date of next review
NJO	25.10.23	25.10.23	Spring 2025

1. 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.

2. 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 5th 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.

Procedure

3. 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 for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

3.7 Other Authorised 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 part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) 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.

3.9 The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday during term time. 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. When assessing requests for leave, the Headteacher will consider:

- The time of year of the proposed trip;
- The length and purpose of the holiday;
- The duration of the holiday and its impact on continuity of learning and or examinations;
- The circumstances of the family and wishes of the parents; and
- The overall attendance pattern of the child.

3.9.1 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.

3.9.2 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 statutory obligations. This means that the child will lose their school place if they are absent for more than 4 weeks.

3.10 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 child's education is the least disrupted as possible. However, it is not always possible to do this.

3.10.1 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.

3.10.2 Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

3.10.3 However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, 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 further absence will be categorised as unauthorised. When an Inset Day has been correctly placed on the day of the religious festival then no further days absences can be authorised.

3.11 Unauthorised absence. Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

3.11.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- 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
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

5. Using Attendance Data

- 5.1 Pupil's attendance is monitored closely and may be shared with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.
- 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 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 Form tutors, on receipt of parental notification (letter or phone call) change N marks to either I for illness, M for medical appointment or C for other authorised circumstance.
- 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 95%.
- 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 The Inclusion and Wellbeing Leaders will conduct home visits for agreed students. Parents may be invited in to meet the Head of Year.
- 5.9 The Pastoral team will follow Cardiff LA's 5-step approach to attendance.
- 5.10 Target groups will get a half-termly update of current attendance and a new target for improved attendance.
- 5.11 Form tutors will discuss attendance with pupils at least once a week.
- 5.12 A letter is sent home at key times for those students whose attendance is below 95%. This are sent by the Heads of Year.

- 5.13 Individual letters of concern are sent out fortnightly for those students whose attendance has been significantly affected over a two-week period. These are sent by the Heads of Year.
- 5.14 No Improvement will result in a Fixed Penalty Warning Letter being sent. If the child has one more absence in the following 15 days, the Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued.

6. 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 looked after children.
- 6.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:
- Restorative approaches
 - Discussion with parents and pupils
 - Referrals to support agencies
 - Tutorial interventions
 - Pupil Voice Activities
 - Friendship groups
 - PSE
 - Reward systems
 - Additional learning support
 - Behaviour support
 - SafeTy
 - Reintegration support packages
- 6.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.
- 6.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Cathays High School will consider a referral to the Education Welfare Service who could begin legal proceedings.

7. Hierarchy of sanctions

7.1 Cathays High School is a caring school and always seeks to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit in parents the support deemed necessary to encourage pupils to attend school, sanctions may be used. In the first instance, parents may receive letters which:

- Request reasons for their child's absence;
- Request medical evidence for their child's absence;
- Express concern about their child's absence and offer advice and support;
- Advise them about their child's lateness and ask for their help in getting their child to school on time;
- Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence;
- Advise them that an Inclusion and Wellbeing Officer intends to visit their home;
- Advise them of their legal responsibilities to ensure their child attends school regularly;
- Advise them that they are at risk of receiving a Fixed Penalty Notice (see 4.11);
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Educational Welfare Service (see 4.12).

7.2 (i) In some circumstances, the school may request that the Educational Welfare Service issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. A warning letter will first be sent if:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A child has been late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term.
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7.3 (ii) A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued if:

- There is one further unauthorised absence within 15 school days of a warning letter having been issued;
- An unauthorised holiday is taken during term time (*note that no warning letter will be received*).

7.4 When the school feels that, despite its best efforts to support the family, attendance is not improving, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. A referral might be made when, for example:

- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed;
- A period of entrenched non-attendance has become established;
- There is a lack of parental cooperation in ensuring a child's regular attendance; or
- A pattern of truancy is persisting.

7.5 Cathays High School will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to 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.

School Attendance Codes (2011)

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
/\	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (present at another school of PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity
J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based learning)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	Authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	Authorised absence
I	Illness	Authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	Authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	Unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	Unauthorised absence
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not required to attend
Y	Partial and forced closure	Not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	Not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	Not required to attend