

Cowbridge School



Attendance Policy

Formulated by: Mrs Thomas, Headteacher

Adopted by the Wellbeing Committee: 7.12.16

Last Reviewed: Spring 2025

Review bi-annually or subject to changes in legislation

Next Review: Spring 2027

Date of any amendments made to policy & brief points:

Date	Details	Approved by
Spring 2019	No revisions	
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Removal of process for fixed penalties – statement that as a general rule we are unlikely to pursue▪ Added information about consideration of medical conditions and extenuating circumstances when considering attendance▪ Removal of reward system to ensure inclusivity	Standards, Performance and Wellbeing Committee - 29.11.22
Spring 2025	No revisions	

1. Overall Aims and Principles

- 1.1 Cowbridge School is committed to achieving a positive and supportive ethos where children feel valued and respected and where children understand the importance of excellent attendance unless there are exceptional, extenuating circumstances. We recognise that excellent attendance and punctuality are key factors in ensuring that children meet their potential.
- 1.2 Research has consistently demonstrated that missing school for even short periods of time can impact upon a learner's chances of reaching their true academic and wider potential.
- 1.3 The table at Appendix 1 of this policy outlines our overall categorisation and strategies for ensuring excellent attendance at school and also highlights the equivalence of lessons (hours) missed of education when attendance becomes irregular.

2. Our Mission, Values and Overall Vision

- 2.1 We have high aspirations as a school. We are a school where learners excel and where we continually strive to develop further excellence at all levels. We believe that our school is a centre of excellence because lessons are exciting and the curriculum meets the needs of all of its learners. We strive to continue to be a school where we are the first choice for families and their children, not just for academic success but because we care about every child. We therefore believe that if a learner is to benefit from education, regular, punctual attendance is crucial.
- 2.2 We recognise that excellent attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career and for establishing habits for the workplace; our school actively promotes and encourages 100% attendance for all our learners. We give high priority to communicating with parents and learners of the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- 2.3 We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communications systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a learner's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive, in partnership with parents and learners, to resolve those problems as quickly as possible and with maximum support, compassion and empathy.

3. Statutory Duty of Schools

- 3.1 Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The accuracy of the register is important to support any statutory interventions that may be required. It should be noted that it is an offence not to maintain accurate registers. Detailed guidance on attendance codes can be found in 'Annex 4.i' of the Inclusion and Pupil Support (Welsh Government, 2016) guidance document no: 203/2016

4. Statutory Duty of Parents/Guardians

- 4.1 Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent/carer is responsible for ensuring that their child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to their child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, alternative provision or by elective home education (parents/carers can choose to provide education for their child).
- 4.2 For the purposes of education legislation, the definition of parent/carer is set out at section 576 of the Education Act 1996. 'Parent' means natural parents/carers, whether they are married or not; it includes any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person, and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law. For further information, see "Parents" and "Parental Responsibility" (Welsh Assembly Government, Circular 12, 2007). Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 (introduced by section 23 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution under section 444. Parents/carers may discharge potential liability for conviction for an offence under section 444 by paying a penalty.

There is no legal requirement for there first to have been a penalty notice before proceeding to prosecution. Cowbridge School views prosecution a last resort sanction after all other avenues of support have failed.

5. Statutory Duties of the Local Authority

- 5.1 Under section 437 of the Education Act 1996, LAs have a duty to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 5.2 Further information can be found in 'Section 4' of the Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance document. In September 2009 section 436A5 of the Education Act 1996 came into force.
- 5.3 This section requires that LAs must make arrangements to enable them to establish (so far as it is possible to do so) the identities of children residing in their area who are not receiving a 'suitable education'. Implementation of the duty under section 436A should be integrated with the wider range of duties placed on LAs, including the Children Act 2004 and the Welsh Government's Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004 that aims to improve outcomes, and safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The new duty should strengthen and complement these existing duties.

6. Roles and Responsibilities of the Police

- 6.1 The police are empowered to issue penalty notices. The police must comply with the local code of conduct issued by the relevant LA when issuing penalty notices and provide to the LA a copy of any notice issued.

7. Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

This section includes information for:

- Parents and Carers;
- Learners;
- School Staff;
- Governors.

7.1 Parents/Carers should:

- Familiarise themselves with the Whole School Attendance Policy;
- Ensure children attend school regularly and punctually;
- Contact school on first day of absence;
- Maintain contact with school for continued absence;
- Explain the reason for a child's absence on or before the child's return to school -unwell or not well is not considered to be an acceptable explanation;
- Provide a note/medical appointment card/letter if their child needs to leave school during the day for any reason. This must be endorsed by the class teacher (or other relevant teacher) and the Achievement Assistant;
- Provide a note/medical documentation as requested if a child has been absent (even if a telephone call has been made) via email to the designated year group email;
- Contact school early where problems with attendance are emerging;
- Support the School in intervention and action plans, including attending meetings when requested;
- Not book holidays or take other leisure time on school days unless this is exceptional and permission from the Headteacher has been sought at least a month in advance and has been authorised accordingly. It is only the Headteacher who is able to authorise holidays.

7.2 Learners must:

- Attend regularly and punctually;
- Meet or exceed the School's minimum individual attendance requirement of 96% however aim for 100%, unless there is a known medical condition or other agreed exceptional and extenuating circumstance known to, and agreed with, the school;
- Provide a note of explanation/appointment card/letter from a parent/carer on the day of return after a period of absence;
- Participate fully when action plans are put into place;
- Report to Reception to sign out/in if leaving or arriving at any time during the school day after the official start of the day at 8:30am.

7.3 The School will:

- Work hard to ensure that all learners feel supported and valued;
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of learner registration;
- Ensure staff receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance;
- Promote positive staff attitudes to learners returning to school following a period of absence;
- Promote a culture which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;

- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the School; including learners, parents/carers, teachers and governors;
- Promote and further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- Send a clear message that if a learner is absent, she/he will be missed and we will contact home as soon as possible;
- Encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance;
- Operate a robust absence management system;
- Monitor, analyse and set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels, including statutory targets;
- Work in partnership with other schools, other agencies and the Local Authority, within the guidelines issued by the Welsh Government;
- Request the use of Fixed Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders and Prosecution to enforce attendance at school, where appropriate;
- Ensure attendance will be an important feature of the School Improvement Plan;
- Ensure regular evaluation of our Whole School Attendance Policy and procedures.

7.4 Governors will:

- Agree targets for attendance at school in line with WG guidelines;
- Support the School with intervention and action plans;
- Receive termly reports on attendance and review the policy annually.

8. PROCEDURES, SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES

8.1 Rewards & Recognition for Good Attendance

Since the pandemic of 2020, senior staff have reviewed this policy and we have considered closely how to remain inclusive and achieve equity. It is widely recognised that a minority of learners with medical conditions and/or from more disadvantaged backgrounds, are unable to achieve the attendance success of the majority of learners. We no longer, therefore reward formally attendance of learners to ensure that learners with medical conditions and/or significant impairments do not feel undervalued. We will continue to promote excellent attendance but to ensure equity for those learners who are disadvantaged, we will no longer provide formal rewards for attendance.

8.2 Sanctions

Learners with poor attendance and punctuality, and their families, will be offered support via the school's robust systems for managing absence. This includes a range of provision and support in accordance with the individual needs, situations and takes account of any impairments/ conditions.

8.3 Fixed-Term Penalty Notices

The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013 empowers headteachers to issue penalty notices and to authorise their deputy and

assistant head to do the same. They may only issue penalty notices to parents/carers in respect of the irregular attendance of a child registered at their school.

Where parents/carers are clearly failing to fulfil their legal obligation to ensure their child's attendance, prosecution will be recommended. Prosecution can also be pursued when a Fixed Penalty Notice fails to ensure improvement or is unpaid.

As a general rule, in order to realise our mission of ensuring equity and in recognition of the complex nature of the cost of living and other circumstances, Cowbridge School is highly unlikely to pursue the route of Fixed Penalty Notice. Our belief is that failure to attend school is as a result of highly complex issues and our role is to provide care, support and guidance and to consider all other routes of engagement.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances where the parent/carer is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance or whereabouts but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so, for example where the parent/carer has:

- failed to engage with any voluntary or supportive measures proposed;
- failed to make adequate arrangements for the whereabouts of their child.

8.4 Registration & Punctuality

Morning registration will take place at 8.30am during form time. Any learner arriving after 08.30 is defined as late.

Afternoon registration will take place at the beginning of the pm session after lunch. This is different for different year groups depending upon whether they are timetabled for break/ lunch one or break/lunch two. Any learner arriving after the register has closed will be coded accordingly.

Arriving after the register has closed is classed as unauthorised absence. Persistent late arrival is classed as truancy. Punctuality to school and to lessons will be closely monitored and the appropriate interventions implemented, including communication with parents and any other appropriate sanction/ intervention.

8.5 Use of Systems and Strategies

Cowbridge School uses electronic systems to monitor attendance and punctuality. We analyse data, patterns and trends to develop future action planning and target setting.

9. ABSENCES

9.1 Illness

Absences due to illness should be reported before 8:30 am on each day of absence. If a parent knows their child will be absent for a certain period (i.e. due to hospital admission/operation) then we will authorise the absence for a slightly longer period of time but request regular updates from the parent. If the learner

is well enough to work at home whilst they are off ill, work is sent home to be completed and returned to school.

If a learner has low attendance and/or has had a lot of time off due to illness, we will request that medical notes/documentation is provided before authorising any further absences due to illness.

If no medical documentation is provided the absence will remain unauthorised and the formal monitoring process will be considered.

9.2 Medical Appointments

We will not authorise a full day's absence for a medical appointment such as dentist/orthodontist. All appointments are requested to be made outside of the school day wherever possible but if an appointment has to be made during the school day we expect the learner to be in before and/or after the appointment, depending on the time. If a learner is absent for the full day we will mark the absence as unauthorised for either the AM or PM register.

9.3 First Day Contact

Parents have a responsibility to contact the School on the first day of absence, to explain the reason for the absence. You have a further responsibility to maintain regular and positive communication with the School, should the absence continue. If your child is absent, and you do not contact school to explain their absence, we will try to contact you via our first day response system.

It is essential that the School has up to date contact numbers and information at all times. If no response is received over 3 days a home visit is made by the Attendance Welfare Officer and/or a member of the School.

9.4 Leave during Term –time

The Pupil Registration (Wales) Regulations 2010 provide headteachers with a discretionary power to authorise leave for a family holiday during term time where parents seek permission in advance. Save in exceptional circumstances, no more than 10 days leave should be granted for this purpose.

Leave during term-time up to 10 school days, will be considered, by the Headteacher. Only in exceptional and extenuating circumstances, will leave be authorised exceeding 10 days. As well as giving consideration to the 'exceptional circumstances', the Headteacher will also consider what school year the learner is in and whether there are any internal or external examinations or assessments taking place, and the levels of absence already accumulated by the child. Parents must submit an application at least 4 weeks in advance, in writing, outlining the circumstances which justify the absence.

You will be informed of the Headteacher's decision in writing.

Each request will be considered on its own merit and will take into consideration the specific situation of the individual family.

9.5 Religious Observance

The School will authorise an absence taken for religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents and child belong. Where necessary, the School will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

9.6 Unauthorised Absence

- Truancy, whole day, part of the day or lessons (including learners found truanting on or offsite);
- Absence which is condoned by the family without a valid reason;
- Unexplained absence;
- Leave taken without prior permission from the Headteacher;
- Late arrival, after the register has closed Please note, medical appointments will be authorised for half a day (1 session), unless there are special, prearranged circumstances. Proof of attending or an appointment card must be provided.

9.7 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence is defined as the School either giving approval in advance for the learner to be absent from school, or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted by the School as satisfactory justification for absence. Only schools, not parents/carers, can authorise an absence, and schools must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so. Any absence that is not authorised by the School should be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

9.8 Persistent Absence

A learner is classed as a persistent absentee when their attendance is 90% or less, at any point during the academic year. Any absence, whether authorised or unauthorised, is included in the figures. Learners who are identified as a persistent absentee, (and their families) will be supported via the School's systems for addressing persistent absence. Support / Interventions may include:

- Speaking to learners to discuss the issues;
- Phone calls home;
- Home Visits;
- Placing learners on report for attendance and/or punctuality;
- Attendance Panels to agree an Attendance Support Plan;
- Formal Monitoring ;
- Phone calls home praising improved attendance/punctuality;
- Well done cards for improved attendance/punctuality.

9.9 Children Missing In Education

Definition of a child missing education:

- The child or young person fails to attend school without offering a reasonable explanation;
- School has been unable to locate the learner at the last known address or any of the contact numbers;

- The parents/Carers have failed to offer an explanation in relation to the child or young person's absence or a change of school or any other educational provision.

Between days 1-5 we will make all investigations to determine the whereabouts or reasons for absence from school.

Between days 6-19 we will refer to the Education Welfare Officer, who, depending on the outcome of necessary enquiries/home visit may instigate further action by relevant LA services and the police.

A copy of this will be kept on file in school. Movement of children in the UK between local authorities and schools is tracked nationally, by each local authority. Movement of children whose families move/take them abroad is tracked by the UK Border Agency.

10. Admission and Removal from The School Roll/ Register

- 10.1 Schools are legally required to advise the local authority about the details of all children admitted and removed from the roll of their school. No child will be removed from the school roll without written instruction from the Responsible Parent(s) in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010.

Appendix 1: Reporting to Parents and Overview of Strategies and Interventions to Tackle Persistent Absence When Considering Potential Impact on Potential

Attendance Level	Judgement in Terms of Potential Impact on Reaching Potential	Examples of Actions by the School
Attendance 96%+	Excellent	Attendance monitored.
91% - 95%	Needs monitoring and improvement 50 – 85 equivalent hours of education missed	Communication with learners and parents via text/phone call home/Letter of concern to parents. Possible investigation and intervention depending upon reasons
90 – 84%	Unacceptable. Cause for concern Equivalent of 95 – 130 hours of lessons missed	School Intervention – Formal School Action - Letters home to parents Investigate patterns and trends Consider an attendance report and support plan Consider involvement of external agencies including LA
85% and under	Major cause for concern - in excess of 140 hours of education missed	Formal School Action Plus Investigation, exploration and intervention by school in liaison with external agencies Consider strategies and sanctions to improve examples include referral to CAMHS, Educational Psychologist, FACT Referral

Chart to illustrate the equivalent lessons missed based upon 3 school terms (190 days of School days per year)

100%	0 lessons missed	76%	230 lessons missed
99%	10 lessons missed	75%	235 lessons missed
98%	20 lessons missed	74%	245 lessons missed
97%	30 lessons missed	73%	255 lessons missed
96%	40 lessons missed	72%	265 lessons missed
95%	50 lessons missed	71%	275 lessons missed
94%	60 lessons missed	70%	285 lessons missed
93%	70 lessons missed	69%	295 lessons missed
92%	80 lessons missed	68%	305 lessons missed
91%	85 lessons missed	67%	315 lessons missed
90%	95 lessons missed	66%	325 lessons missed
89%	105 lessons missed	65%	330 lessons missed
88%	115 lessons missed	64%	340 lessons missed
87%	125 lessons missed	63%	350 lessons missed
86%	130 lessons missed	62%	360 lessons missed
85%	140 lessons missed	61%	370 lessons missed
84%	150 lessons missed	60%	380 lessons missed
83%	160 lessons missed	50%	475 lessons missed
82%	170 lessons missed	40%	570 lessons missed
81%	180 lessons missed	30%	665 lessons missed
80%	190 lessons missed	20%	760 lessons missed
79%	200 lessons missed	10%	855 lessons missed
78%	210 lessons missed	5%	900 lessons missed
77%	220 lessons missed	0%	950 lessons missed

Learners are required to attend School for 190 days. This means that there are already 175 days of available family and recreational time.