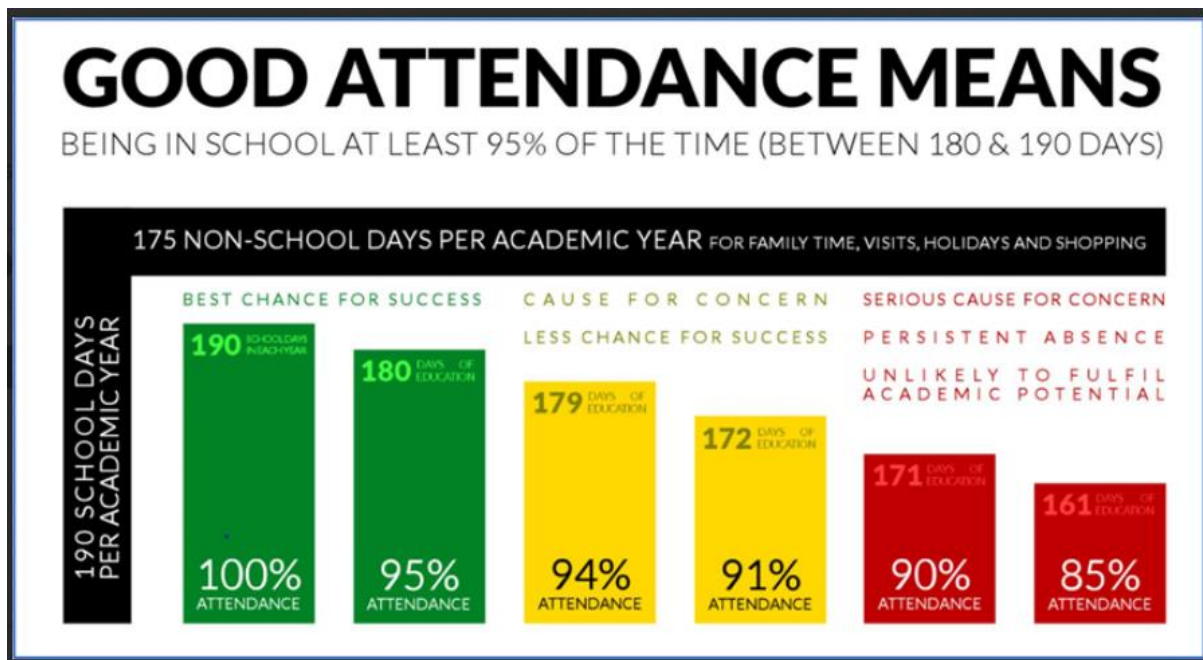


## Achieving Potential with Excellent Attendance and Clear Boundaries in Relation to 'Screen-time'.

Now that the new school year is fully underway, we remain focused on continual improvement. Our **Strategic Priorities for 2025/26** are designed to ensure every student thrives, both academically and personally. Specifically, we urge all parents to ensure that your child attends school every day possible. We have 190 days of school available and each day is extremely important in achieving success incrementally. There is a vast array of research reports available into the impact of absence and how this affects the progress and wellbeing of young people. We urge all parents to support us in supporting your child by ensuring excellent attendance at school.

Please make every effort to avoid holidays in term time. If, in exceptional circumstances, you wish to take an unavoidable break during the school term, please write to us asking permission well in advance so that we can discuss this request with you, before determining whether to authorise it as exceptional leave. If your child is authorised to take the leave, staff can discuss specifically how to ensure that your child endeavours to improve their skills.

Remember, good attendance means ...



However, being present in school will only get students so far. Their quality of attendance also matters. Students need to be energised, engaged and ready to learn in order to ensure their success.

We are experiencing a small number of students who are showing signs of being very tired when they are attending school. In some cases, these pupils are spending an unhealthy amount of time on social media, gaming or on other on-screen activities. We cannot emphasise enough the need for parents to ensure healthy levels of online use by your children. Again, there are many studies highlighting the positive and adverse effects of social media use. It is particularly harmful for young people when the use is unbalanced, compared with other activities necessary to good physical and mental health.

'Screens, Teens and the Impact on Mental Health' - The World Health Organisation is one of many sources and the key findings are as follows:

- *More than 1 in 10 adolescents (11%) showed signs of problematic social media behaviour, struggling to control their use and experiencing negative consequences. Girls reported higher levels of problematic social media use than boys (13% vs 9%).*
- *Over a third (36%) of young people reported constant contact with friends online, with the highest rates among 15-year-old girls (44%).*
- *A third (34%) of adolescents played digital games daily, with more than 1 in 5 (22%) playing for at least 4 hours on days when they engage in gaming.*
- *12% of adolescents are at risk of problematic gaming, with boys more likely than girls to show signs of problematic gaming (16% vs 7%).*

Presenteeism online, outside of the school day, is driving absenteeism or lack of concentration in schools. Please could you monitor your child's use of screen/electronic devices, and help him/her to develop healthy, balanced use of screen-time, alongside other activities, including physical exercise. As a result of key trends, our curriculum at Cowbridge now includes additional time dedicated to physical activity and wellbeing. We have banned the use of phones during the school day for at least the past 3 years and this has proved to be a successful initiative. We wish to thank all families who support us with this by emphasising the need to ensure that phones are turned off and placed in a zipped pocket of the school bag as soon as your child enters the school site.