





*Respect – Commitment – Success*  
*Parch – Ymrywmiad – Llwyddiant*

# CLUSTER ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Document Version Control

<b>Document</b>	<i>Cluster Attendance Policy</i>
<b>Reference</b>	<i>2022SP/Cluster Attendance Policy</i>
<b>Associated Policies and Documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>All Wales Attendance Framework</i></li></ul>
<b>Author</b>	<i>Charlotte Robins (Deputy Headteacher)</i>
<b>Reviewer</b>	<i>Andrew Williams (Headteacher)</i>
<b>Consultation</b>	<i>Standards Committee of the Governing Body</i>
<b>Approval</b>	<i>Full Governing Body</i>
<b>Date of approval</b>	<i>July 2022</i>
<b>Date of review</b>	<i>July 2025</i>
<b>Date of publication</b>	<i>September 2022</i>
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	

## Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Name of Policy or Procedure</b>	Cluster Attendance Policy
<b>Date of review/approval</b>	July 2022
<b>Those involved in the assessment</b>	Charlotte Robins (Deputy Headteacher) and the Headteachers of the cluster primary schools
<b>Protected characteristics unlikely to be impacted by the policy/procedure and reasons for drawing these conclusions (by reference to each characteristic or group of characteristics)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Gender/sex</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> <li>• Belief</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Gender reassignment</li> <li>• Marital status</li> </ul> <p>This policy addresses both attendance and punctuality of students, the rewards and sanctions applicable for poor attendance and punctuality and the manner in which these are addressed by school staff.</p>
<b>Protected characteristics which could be impacted by the policy/procedure i.e. there is the potential for having a negative differential impact – reasons for drawing these conclusions by reference to each characteristic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion – some students may practice religions that have a need for observance on days that do not coincide with school holidays. The policy indicates that authorised absence can be granted provided there is advance notification page 3-4).</li> <li>• Pregnancy/maternity – prenatal welfare appointments may be required during pregnancy and postnatal leave to establish a parent/child bond. This is covered by the recognition that authorised absence can be granted for medical appointments (page 3-4), though no mention is made in that paragraph of more general 'welfare' appointments.</li> <li>• The 'medical and dental appointments' category for which authorised absence can be granted might be extended to include 'welfare' appointments. Alternatively, the reference to 'major family issues e.g. bereavement' (page 3) might be altered to refer to 'major welfare issues'.</li> <li>• Disability (special educational needs) – particular support is given to students with special educational needs at the time of transition from primary school (page 6).</li> </ul>

	<p>The policy underlines that support is given to students and families where persistent non-attendance is an issue (page 5).</p> <p>The policy also recognises that before issuing a fixed penalty notice consideration is given to the existence of special educational needs the student may have – and more generally to any issues of equality (page 6).</p> <p>Although attendance of all students is monitored the policy makes clear there is a particular focus on targeted groups of learners including students with Additional Learning Needs, Children Looked After and those from Ethnic Minorities and the traveller community (page 5).</p>
<p><b>How the policy as reviewed/approved takes account of each characteristic for which there could be a negative differential impact – by reference to each of those characteristics</b></p>	<p>Relevant sections of the policy are identified above and amendments have been made in the policy to reflect this</p>
<p><b>Recommended changes to mitigate against potential negative differential impacts</b></p>	<p>An additional paragraph is included in the section 'Authorisation of absence' as follows:</p> <p>The school can authorise absences, under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a child is too ill to attend school and a message is left explaining the reason for absence;</li> <li>• a child has a medical or dental appointment;</li> <li>• there is a family welfare or safeguarding issue;</li> <li>• there is a major welfare issue such as bereavement;</li> <li>• there is a need for religious observance.</li> </ul> <p>Two additional paragraphs are included in the section 'Interventions' as follows:</p> <p>Although attendance of all students is monitored there is a particular focus on targeted groups of learners, i.e. students with Additional Learning Needs, More Able and Talented students, students entitled to Free School Meals, Looked After Children and those from Ethnic Minorities and the traveller community.</p>

	<p>The Key Stage Wellbeing Officers complete a termly Vulnerable Attendance Profile for Cardiff Council. This highlights students with persistent poor attendance and details the graduated level of support in place for these students.</p> <p>An additional paragraph is included in the section 'Hierarchy of sanctions' as follows:</p> <p>Before issuing a FPN the EWS takes into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the level of absence;</li><li>• any equalities considerations relating to the child or the family;</li><li>• any statement of Special Educational Needs;</li><li>• the history of attendance issues and action taken;</li><li>• Welsh Government guidance;</li><li>• the likely effectiveness of a FPN as a tool for obtaining compliance;</li><li>• the level of parental engagement/cooperation;</li><li>• any adverse effect a fine may have on the welfare of the family.</li></ul> <p>An additional paragraph is included in the section 'Collaborative working – Radyr Comprehensive and cluster primaries' as follows:</p> <p>The Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) meets with feeder primary Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to obtain information on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) students. Information on areas of need, previous provision etc is shared to remove any potential barriers to successful transition for these vulnerable students. These students have additional transition visits to give reassurance.</p>
--	--

**The commentary highlighted in red above has been replicated in the policy to assist the reader in locating the commentary.**

---

## Introduction

A student's success at school is likely to be affected negatively if their attendance is poor. Those who do not attend regularly may fall behind in their learning, leading to feelings of frustration and unhappiness. As inclusive schools within the Radyr cluster, we seek to provide environments in which all young people can flourish as members of a happy, caring and safe community. **It is our goal that all of our students attend school regularly and on time, making the most of the opportunities available to them.**

There is a strong link between attendance rates and examination success. Research shows that missing 17 days of school a year (an attendance rate of 91%) can result in a drop of a GCSE grade across all subjects. Unauthorised absences would not be accepted in the workplace and we need to help our students to prepare for life as effective adults.

The Radyr Cluster Attendance Framework has its basis in Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). **We believe that all young people have the right to education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.**

The Radyr Cluster Attendance Framework is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

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

## Principles

Our policy is underpinned by the following principles:

The law states that:

- Parents and guardians are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child receives effective full-time education between the ages of five and sixteen;
- The local authority is required under section 437 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that a child for whom they are responsible is receiving suitable education by regular attendance at school or otherwise;
- The school is required under The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take attendance registers twice a day - at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. Every case is different and we will always try to support families to improve the situation. However, it must be understood that a parent/carer who fails to send their child to school regularly faces fines of up to £2,500 or even a prison sentence. Cardiff Council regularly prosecutes parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

The Radyr Cluster Attendance policy is designed to help teachers, parents and students understand their rights, responsibilities and roles when it comes to school attendance. **By working in partnership, it is our hope that every student achieves over 95% attendance, whilst our expectation is that our students will be in school 100% of the time.**

## **Aims**

This policy aims to:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- Outline our systems for monitoring and improving attendance;
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities to ensure consistency and rigour.

## **Registration procedures**

To ensure accuracy and consistency, all students are registered electronically via the School Information Management System (SIMS). All schools ensure that data input occurs at least weekly. Students are registered within the first ten minutes of each AM/PM session in primary schools and in each lesson in the Comprehensive school.

Teachers, cover supervisors and supply teachers, where applicable, are each provided with login credentials for SIMS and are required to record present (/) or absent (N) against each student's name. No student may be left with a 'missing' mark.

In instances of lateness, members of staff are required to alter the absent (N) mark to the late (L) mark. The degree of lateness may be recorded using the appropriate function within SIMS.

## **Categorisation of absence**

Teachers, cover supervisors and supply teachers, where applicable, are permitted to use the following registration codes only: Present (/), absent (N) and late (L).

The attendance officers, pastoral teams and Senior Leadership Team may, upon investigating incidents of absence, use the following codes as set out by the Welsh Government 2010:

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| B | Educated off-site          |
| D | Dual-registered            |
| P | Approved sporting activity |
| V | Educational visit          |

J	Interview
W	Work experience
C	Other authorised circumstance
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
M	Medical appointment
S	Study leave
E	Excluded
R	Religious observance
T	Traveller absence
O	Other unauthorised circumstance
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
U	Late (after registration closed)
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age students
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	Student not on roll yet
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)

### **Procedures for absence**

Parents/carers are asked to contact the school by telephone and/or email on the first day of their child's absence. Individual schools monitor telephone calls/absence lines each morning.

Should a student be absent from school without explanation, the individual school will follow its own procedures for contacting home (e.g. text, truancy call), asking parents/carers to make contact with the school. Further contact will be made if the absence continues for longer than one day and no response is received from the parents/carers.

Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents/carers seeking explanation.

### **Authorisation of absence**

The school can authorise absences, under the following circumstances:

- a child is too ill to attend school and a message is left explaining the reason for absence;
- **a child has a medical or dental appointment;**
- there is a family welfare or safeguarding issue;
- **there is a major welfare issue such as bereavement;**
- **there is a need for religious observance.**



In the cases of medical, dental and welfare/safeguarding appointments and religious observance, the school can only authorise such absences if it is advised in advance.

Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school. Radyr cluster schools exercise caution in the authorisation of absence and parents/carers must provide the school with a full picture of the reasons leading to their child's absence.

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, by law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance. **Schools within the Radyr cluster will only authorise family holidays where parents are able to demonstrate that unique or exceptional circumstances prevent the holiday from being taken outside of term time. In general, holidays during term time will not be authorised.** In June 2012, Cardiff Local Authority requested that all schools do not authorise holidays in term time, unless in 'exceptional' circumstances- these circumstances can be found in Appendix 1. If a parent believes that they have an 'exceptional' reason for requesting authorisation, they are requested to submit a Leave of Absence (LOA) form, which will be available on the website or from the main office. An example of this form can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### **Procedures for Lateness**

Schools within the Radyr cluster may operate a 'late at the gate' scheme in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify students who are persistently late for school. Schools have the right to include lateness within the framework of their Behaviour Management Policies.

If a child arrives late to school, they must ensure that they sign in to a 'late book' contained in the reception. They will then be coded "U" as per the coding system. Students who are late ten or more times in a school term may be issued with a FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice.)

If students are required to leave school within the day, prior notice must be given to the school (agreed at the discretion of the Headteacher.)

### **Intervention**

Radyr Cluster Schools recognise the important role that parents/carers play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently via a variety of means.

In the Comprehensive school, the Attendance Officer, Wellbeing Officers, Pastoral Progress Leaders and Directors of School closely monitor post-registration attendance lists in an attempt to identify instances of truancy. In such cases, Attendance Officers alert the Pastoral teams/ Senior Leadership Team and telephone parents/carers so that action can be taken to locate missing students and return them to safety.

The Education Welfare Service and South Wales Police, conduct 'truancy sweeps' in Cardiff City Centre and throughout the local area.

Where concerns are raised by parents/carers or staff about a student's school attendance, an Attendance Officer or pastoral/key member of staff may make a planned or unplanned home visit to discuss the matter. During the home visit the member of staff will provide information and advice, and seek to support the student in returning to school.

When a student has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return. The pastoral/leadership team are responsible for ensuring that extended support is made available to the student, helping them to 'catch up'. In some cases, the leadership team may choose to re-examine the student's curriculum offer to encourage better attendance.

The Attendance Officer works closely with the Radyr Cluster Schools to ensure good school attendance is maintained at all times. The Attendance Officer also works closely with the cluster schools to ensure that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority for the duration of students' compulsory education.

The Key Stage Wellbeing Officers complete a termly Vulnerable Attendance Profile for Cardiff Council. This highlights students with persistent poor attendance and details the graduated level of support in place for these students.

Although attendance of all students is monitored there is a particular focus on targeted groups of learners, i.e. students with Additional Learning Needs, More Able and Talented students, students entitled to Free School Meals, Looked After Children and those from Ethnic Minorities and the traveller community.

Excellent attendance is celebrated and a range of incentives are used across the cluster to promote good attendance, including achievement assemblies and reward trips.

### **Hierarchy of sanctions**

Schools within the Radyr Cluster are caring schools and always seek to resolve matters of poor attendance through effective partnership working with parents. On the rare occasion that the school is unable to elicit from parents the support deemed necessary to encourage students to attend school, sanctions will be used. In the first instance, parents/carers 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 they must provide proof of appointments to be able to pick their child up early from school;

- Advise them that the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence;
- Advise them that an Attendance Officer/ key member of staff 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;
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Education Welfare Service.

In some circumstances, the school may request that the Education Welfare Service issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013. These circumstances include:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A student has been late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve and sustain attendance.

Once a request has been the EWS will issue a warning notice will be issued to parents and attendance will be monitored for a 15 day period. If there are any further absences then an FPN will be issued.

Before issuing a FPN the EWS takes into account:

- the level of absence;
- any equalities considerations relating to the child or the family;
- any statement of Special Educational Needs;
- the history of attendance issues and action taken;
- Welsh Government guidance;
- the likely effectiveness of a FPN as a tool for obtaining compliance;
- the level of parental engagement/cooperation;
- any adverse effect a fine may have on the welfare of the family.

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 may 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.

Radyr Cluster Schools will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents/carers 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.

The SAO meets regularly with the designated person at the cluster schools to discuss individual cases of absenteeism, truancy or lateness across the cluster and reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions to date. Patterns across schools are discussed in termly Radyr Cluster Meetings.

Decisions are taken at this time as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral to the Education Welfare Service.

The SAO will meet with the Educational Welfare Officer as required to review cases and seek support. The Educational Welfare Officer is responsible for contributing to the Radyr Cluster's drive for school effectiveness through providing advice on proven good practice and promoting the Attendance Framework.

Attendance data is reviewed at the end of the academic year by the Senior Leadership Teams of the Radyr cluster schools and is used to populate the Self-Evaluation document and inform the School Improvement Plan.

### **Collaborative working – Radyr Comprehensive and cluster primaries**

In the primary schools, the School Attendance Officer (SAO) from Radyr Comprehensive School will assist primary colleagues following this approach:

#### Letters

- Letter 1 – Raising awareness with parents that school are monitoring their child's attendance over a period of three weeks;  
either
- Improvement Letter – Letters to be sent to students whose attendance has improved following monitoring period  
or
- Letter 2 – Letter to arrange meeting to discuss what further support can be offered and appropriate referrals made if necessary;
- Letter 3 – Letter inviting parents to attend meeting with SAO for handover.

#### Meetings

- Meeting 1- Meeting held to offer support from internal/external agencies. School contract to be signed;
- Meeting 2- – Meeting held to introduce SAO to family and discussion about possible referral to EWO. Previous support offered will be discussed and and further support required will be explored.
- Any other meetings held to be logged and used as evidence if required. This could include drop in sessions, parent meetings/calls.

The SAO will also provide the following support to the cluster primaries:

- Termly drop in sessions to review students under 88% attendance and assist with a register check to ensure codes are accurate – if primary school feels these are necessary and requests them;
- Following handover meetings, RCS to complete referral to EWS;

- Support and advice as and when required throughout the school year.

The Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) meets with feeder primary Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to obtain information on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) students. Information on areas of need, previous provision etc is shared to remove any potential barriers to successful transition for these vulnerable students. These students have additional transition visits to give reassurance.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Governing Body**

The Governing Body for each school in the cluster is responsible for regularly reviewing and approving this cluster Attendance Policy in conjunction with the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher in order to monitor its effectiveness.

### **The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team**

- The Headteacher for each school in the cluster is responsible for reviewing and approving this cluster attendance policy in conjunction with the Governing Body and monitoring its effectiveness;
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team in each school in the cluster are also responsible for communicating this policy and its importance to the entire school community;
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team in each school in the cluster will monitor how staff implement this policy to ensure it is applied consistently'
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team in each school in the cluster will support students, parents and carers in upholding the school's attendance policy to promote high standards of attendance;
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team in each school in the cluster will liaise effectively with parents/carers regarding their child's attendance;
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership team in each school in the cluster will liaise appropriately with the EWS and a variety of outside agencies to ensure all students are fully and adequately supported to achieve high standards of attendance.

### **The School Attendance Officer/s**

The School Attendance Officer/s are required to:

- Maintain accurate attendance records for each student. Registration data is recorded using SIMS and details of interventions and strategies are recorded using the School Attendance Manager (SAM).;
- Produce detailed accounts pertaining to the attendance of students (usually using SIMS);
- Meet and liaise with the EWO and other multi-agencies as required.

## **Parents/Carers**

Parents/Carers are expected to:

- Support their child in adhering to the cluster attendance policy to ensure high standards of attendance;
- Inform the school of any changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance;
- Discuss any attendance concerns with the relevant members of staff promptly;
- Support the school in upholding this cluster attendance policy to ensure high standards of attendance in the school.

## **Students**

Students are expected to:

- Abide by the cluster attendance policy at all times.

## Appendix 1

### Exceptional Circumstances (Radyr Cluster Guidance)

#### Decision to authorise absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010, give schools discretionary power to grant leave for the purpose of 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. Schools within the Radyr Cluster will only authorise family holidays where parents are able to demonstrate that unique or exceptional circumstances prevent the holiday from being taken outside of term time. **In general, holidays during term time will not be authorised.**

The decision to authorise absence is at the headteacher's discretion, but it is the school's policy that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances based on the school's assessment of the situation. This is fully supported by Cardiff County Council.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. For this reason, schools will rightly prioritise attendance.

If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time, it would not be normal to authorise absence. **Absence during term time for holidays is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.**

The considerations that the school will ascertain whether the request is because of an exceptional circumstance are outlined below:

- Where a parent or child is experiencing a life limiting illness.
- Absences to visit family members are also not usually granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Families may need time to recover from trauma, crisis or bereavement involving an immediate relative, i.e.: parent, guardian, carer, sibling or grandparent.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member, i.e.: other relative, is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances, civil or ceremonial activity are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular recurring events.
- The needs of families of service personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday times.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not so reasonably be scheduled at another time.



## Appendix 2

### Exemplar Leave of Absence Form

I request permission to take the following student/s out of school:

Name: ..... Class: .....

Name: ..... Class: .....

Name: ..... Class: .....

I understand that under the terms of the Education (Penalty Notices-Wales) Regulations 2013, Local Authorities have been given powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) as an alternative to taking legal action against parents/carers when responding to absenteeism from school.

Reason for absence: (please give full details in the box provided and any other documentary evidence to support this request):

Dates of absence:

From (*day, date, month*) ..... to (*day, date, month*) .....

Parent Name: ..... Signed: .....

Date: .....

Permission is not authorised for the above named student/s to have leave of absence.

Permission is authorised for the above named student/s to have leave of absence.

*(delete as applicable)*

Name: .....

Signed: .....

Headteacher /Deputy Headteacher (please delete as applicable)

Date: .....