



Respect – Commitment – Success
Parch – Ymrywmiad – Llwyddiant

Radyr Cluster Primary Schools’ Pupil Attendance Policy 2023

**Radyr Primary School Bryn Deri Primary School Danescourt Primary School Gwaelod y Garth
Primary School Pentyrch Primary School Creigiau Primary School Tongwynlais Primary School**

Reviewed September 2022

Introduction

A pupil'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 Primary Cluster, we seek to provide school 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 pupils attend school regularly and on time, making the most of the opportunities available to them.

There is also a strong link between attendance rates and later 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 at secondary school. Unauthorised absences would not be accepted in the workplace and we need to help our pupils to prepare for life as effective adults.

The Radyr Primary 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 an education, based on equality of opportunity, and that the school, in partnership with parents and carers, and other parties, must take measures to encourage regular school attendance and reduce rates of absenteeism.

The Radyr Primary 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 Primary Cluster Attendance policy is designed to help teachers, parents/carers and pupils understand their rights, responsibilities and roles when it comes to school attendance. By working in partnership, it is our hope that every pupil achieves over 95% attendance, whilst our expectation is that our pupils 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 pupils are registered electronically via the School Information Management System (SIMS). All schools ensure that data input occurs at least weekly. Pupils are registered within the first ten minutes of each AM/PM session in the primary schools.

Teachers and supply teachers are required to record present (/) or absent (N) against each pupil's name. No pupil 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. In the primary schools, later after the register has closed is 30 minutes after the start of the school session.

If a pupil is late for school in the cluster primary schools, the expectation is that parents/carers present at the school office and state the reason for lateness.

Categorisation of absence

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

The primary school head teacher or deputy headteacher 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 pupils
Y	Partial and forced closure
Z	pupil 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 will monitor telephone calls/absence lines each morning.

Should a pupil be absent from school without an explanation, the individual school will follow its own procedures for contacting home (e.g. text or call), asking parents/carers to contact 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.

If no reason/explanation is given by parents/carers for the child's 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 Primary 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.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, schools within the Radyr Primary Cluster will follow updated local authority guidance and will authorise one family holiday of up to five days.

This authorisation is subject however, to the child's attendance over the previous 12 months hitting the minimum threshold of 92% below which, a fixed penalty notice for a holiday may be issued. The primary schools also recognise however, that some pupil's attendance may have been affected by illness due to COVID or periods of isolation in the previous 2021-22 school year. This may be taken into consideration when considering a holiday request and if attendance is lower than 92% but authorised, families may still have holiday of up to one week authorised, without a fixed penalty notice being requested.

Any requests for a fixed penalty notice should be submitted to Education Welfare within 2 weeks after the end of the holiday, in order to ensure that any evidence that might need to be produced in court is kept within the time-frames. Any requests for holidays that took place in 2021-2022 academic cannot be submitted.

Procedures for Lateness

Schools within the Radyr Primary Cluster may also operate a 'late at the gate' scheme in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school.

If a child arrives late to school (30 minutes after the start of the school day), they must ensure that they sign into a 'late book' contained in the school office/reception area. They will then be coded "U" as per the coding system. Pupils who are late ten or more times in a school term may be issued with an FPN (Fixed Penalty Notice.)

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

In the primary schools, school leaders and registration administrators will telephone parents/carers when pupils are late/absent from school. Where concerns are raised by parents/carers or staff about a pupil's school attendance, the cluster Attendance Officer 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 pupil in returning to school.

When a pupil has been absent for an extended period, they are welcomed positively on their return to school and individual wellbeing support is offered to the pupil to try to address any particular issues or concerns around school.

The Attendance Officer works closely with the Radyr Primary 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 pupils' compulsory education.

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

Excellent attendance is celebrated by all the primary schools within the Radyr Cluster.

Hierarchy of sanctions

Schools within the Radyr Primary 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/carers, the support deemed necessary to encourage pupils 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 issue parents/carers with a warning notice before considering requesting a full Fixed Penalty Notice. These circumstances include:

- There have been 10 unauthorised sessions within one school term (these do not need to be consecutive);
- A pupil has been persistently late (after registration has closed) on 10 occasions within one school term;
- Parents/carers have failed to engage with the school and/or the Education Welfare Service in attempts to improve and sustain attendance but where court proceedings have not been instigated.

After a warning notice has been issued to parents/carers, attendance will be monitored for a 15-day period. If there are any further absences then an FPN will be issued.

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 absence or truancy is persisting.

Fixed Penalty Notices will not be used to address entrenched attendance issues. If attendance is below 70%, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service. The child and their parents/carers should be working with the cluster Attendance Officer and moving through the 5 Step Approach in order to meet the referral criteria from the cluster Attendance Officer to the Education Welfare Service.

Radyr Primary 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 Primary 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 Primary 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 Primary 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 pupils 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 pupils 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 secondary school Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCO) meets with feeder primary Additional Learning Needs Leaders (ALNCOs) to obtain information on Additional Learning Needs (ALN) pupils.

Information on areas of need, previous provision etc is shared to remove any potential barriers to successful transition for these vulnerable pupils. These pupils 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 pupils, 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 pupils are fully and adequately supported to achieve high standards of attendance.

The Cluster School Attendance Officer based at Radyr Comprehensive school and each school's administrator is required to:

- Maintain accurate attendance records for each pupil. 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 pupils (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.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Abide by the cluster attendance policy at all times in an age/stage appropriate way.

This policy will be reviewed in the autumn term of 2023 or sooner if guidance should change.

Appendix 1

Exceptional Circumstances (Radyr Primary 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.

The decision to authorise absence is at the headteacher's discretion, but it is the school's policy that absences will only 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 considered but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situation rather than regular recurring events.
- The needs of families of service personnel will be considered 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 pupil/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 pupil/s to have leave of absence.
Permission is authorised for the above named pupil/s to have leave of absence.
(*delete as applicable*)

Name:
Signed:
Headteacher /Deputy Headteacher (please delete as applicable)
Date: