



Belong... Believe... Achieve...

# Islwyn High School

## Attendance Policy

### Policy into practice document

Reviewed by: Mr M Thomas – Assistant Headteacher

Ratified by Governors: 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Date to be reviewed: 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023

**Signed:** Mr J Hicks  
Headteacher

Mr G Bryce  
Chair of Governors

## **Declaration and Aims:**

Islwyn High is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

All children and young people have the fundamental right to a free, high quality education which takes account of their talents, wishes, and aspirations. Education develops the potential of each individual, and prepares them to take their place in society and to play an active role in adult life.

At Islwyn High School, we consider regular attendance to be the first pre-requisite of this entitlement. If pupils are not in school, they cannot benefit from the educational opportunities that the school offers. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils.

We aim to promote and encourage good habits of punctuality and attendance in all our pupils. The school will work collaboratively with parents, pupils and the LA to secure this.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that a comprehensive and consistent system of procedures is in place to produce a common and focused approach towards maximising attendance of all pupils.

## **Objectives:**

- To create and maintain a caring school environment where pupils are treated as individuals and understand the value of good attendance at school. To have a strong attendance ethos.
- To adopt a consistent approach to attendance issues and provide clear guidelines to staff, pupils, parents and other interested parties.
- To record attendance accurately in line with prescribed requirements and guidelines.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality accurately and effectively, identify reasons for non-attendance and communicate information to relevant parties.
- To use attendance data/information effectively to inform and assist ways of improving school and pupil performance.
- To set high expectations for pupils with regard to attendance and to reward good attendance and highlight improved attendance.
- To maximise levels of attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
- To identify pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern at an early stage and provide effective support/intervention for improvement.
- To have in place and make effective use of additional support systems for pupils and parents, e.g. EWS.
- To regularly examine the curriculum in order to develop ways of improving the quality of provision and pupil attitude to attendance.
- To foster effective inter-agency links to support and promote attendance.

- To promote and develop effective partnerships and good working relationships with parents to support the attendance of pupils.

## **Parents' Responsibilities**

Parents and guardians of pupils of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education by attendance at school (or otherwise - if they can satisfy statutory regulations) (Education Act 1996).

They are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and remain at school (unless alternative arrangements are made). They are also responsible for informing schools of any reason for absence as soon as possible, (on the first day), stating when the child is expected to return to school. If a child registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. Since March 2001, a more serious offence has been introduced, which requires proof that the parent was aware of their child's non-attendance and failed to act.

Under this higher offence, a warrant can be issued compelling a parent to attend court. Prosecution under Section 444(1A) can lead to a custodial sentence.

Improving regular attendance at school is a key priority for schools. The Welsh Assembly Government has introduced important amendments to legislation from September 2014 regarding school absenteeism which include Fixed Penalty Notices. Under the Education Act 1996, it is a criminal offence if a parent "fails to secure their child's regular attendance at school". This means that a Headteacher can request the issue of an FPN for irregular attendance of a child at their school or other approved educational provision.

### **Some examples of when a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued:**

- **Unauthorised absences** – where a child has lost at least 10 sessions (5 school days) due to unauthorised absences, the parent/s will receive formal notification from the Headteacher explaining the possible actions that may be taken if attendance does not improve. These days do not need to be consecutive. Which can include Fixed Penalty notice if applicable.
- **Holidays during term time** – a Fixed Penalty Notice can be issued for an unauthorised holiday of 10 sessions (5 school days) or more. Parents do not have the automatic right to withdraw their child/children from school for a holiday.
- **Persistent lateness** – where a pupil has a late mark recorded ten times or more (there are two registration sessions in a school day; am and pm)
- **Truancy** – where the police become involved with a pupil during school hours for being absent where no acceptable reason for absence has been provided.
- **Absence following holidays** – Pupils are expected to attend school without any absences for 15 days following an authorised holiday. Failure to do this will result in a fixed penalty fine.

Leave of absence during term time will be discouraged, however, should a parent wish to take their child on holiday during term time, they must apply no more than four weeks in advance in writing to the Headteacher. Authorisation will only be given if their attendance is over the agreed target over the last **twelve** months. Unauthorised holidays may incur a fine.

## **The School's Responsibilities**

The school must ensure that effective systems and procedures are in place for: - encouraging school attendance, effectively recording and monitoring attendance, identifying cases of poor attendance and investigating the causes of these and dealing with them. At Islwyn High School, we undertake these responsibilities in the following ways:

### **I. Informing parents**

The school is charged with ensuring that parents are reminded of their statutory duties and that they are made aware of the school's attendance policy and its requirements. In particular, parents are made aware of the school's requirements with regard to notification of reasons for absence on the first day of absence (or before when appropriate, e.g. hospital/medical appointments).

General information, for parents, is provided in all school communication. The importance of good attendance is also highlighted in the Home-School Agreement.

### **II. Setting and publishing improvement Targets**

These are set annually - for improvement in attendance and reduction of absence.

The targets are published in the Governor's Annual Report to Parents and the School Development Plan. They are also forwarded to the LA and EAS.

The school has also noted the information from the system of benchmarking attendance levels throughout schools in Wales based on the free school meal indicator.

Attendance targets are informed by the level predicted in the model and set at a level of challenge for improvement.

Schools are required to base their targets on total absences rather than unauthorised absences.

### **III. Registering attendance**

Under provisions of the Education Act 1996(s434) and the Pupil Registration Regulations 1995, schools are required to keep an Attendance Register.

The register is kept electronically, with daily backup procedures run centrally by Caerphilly SIMS team.

The school is registered with the Information commissioner as required by the Data protection Act 1998.

Registers are legal documents. They must always be up to date and accurate. As a minimum, pupils are registered twice per day. Any absence is registered initially as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. Appropriate codes are entered for all authorised absences, e.g. if the pupil is on an approved activity off site.

At Islwyn High School, pupils are registered - electronically - at the start of each session by their Form Tutor/Subject Teacher using "Lesson Monitor."

Pupils are also registered by subject teachers within the first five minutes of the start of each lesson. However, care must be taken to register the pupil's presence if the pupil arrives after the lesson has started - with a late mark.

Although pupils are registered electronically, the following data reports are available weekly to the PM, Assistant Head and EWO.

- a) A summary of attendance data for the school showing, in each Year Group, the percentages for attendance and unauthorised absence.
- b) PM's given a list of all lates for the week.

This facilitates much closer monitoring of attendance and forms the basis of discussions about attendance between Pastoral Staff and pupils.

#### IV. **Authorising absence from school.**

Absence from school is categorised in two ways:

- a) Authorised
- b) Unauthorised

Authorised absence is an absence that is considered to be unavoidable and a valid explanation is provided by the parents, e.g. illness. The school has been informed of the reason and has accepted it.

However, it is the duty of parents/guardians to furnish the school with all necessary information.

In any case of absence, therefore, the school should be contacted on (or before, if possible) the first day of absence, by telephone or email. The school may also be contacted using the out-of-hours answer-phone.

A written note is also perfectly acceptable, e.g. to cover a medical appointment known in advance.

All notes and notes-in-advance are sent immediately to the Attendance Office. The school Attendance Officer then enters all necessary codes into the registration system. The notes are kept for one academic year. (These are scanned and kept electronically.)

Unauthorised absence results where no reason is provided or where the reason is not considered to be valid by the school. Any absence, where a valid reason has not been provided, by 9.30 a.m., on the day in question, will initially be regarded as unauthorised. The school's First-Day-of-Absence Contact Procedure will then be implemented (see below).

A text message is sent every day if a pupil is absent and telephone calls are made to all parents of absent pupils who are of a particular concern asking them to contact the school regarding absence. Any pupil absent for 3 consecutive days without a reason and failed contact with home will be passed onto the EWO.

The outcome of all contacts made is recorded in the comments box on SIMS and a report is available as and when required.

The responsibility for the authorisation of absence rests with the school. It is the school, not the parents, who authorises an absence.

Parents wishing to apply for Leave of Absence, for their child, should contact the school. A form entitled "Leave of Absence" is provided for this purpose. The approved forms will be given to the Attendance Officer who will then enter the necessary codes into the register.

Parents can be given leave, by the school, to take a child on holiday. It should be noted, however, that there is no parental right to take a child out of school during term time for a holiday. Formal requests must be made to the Head teacher on the school's official form. The application must be made by the parent (or the person with parental responsibility) with whom the child normally resides. Pupils are expected to attend school without any absences for 15 days following an authorised holiday. Failure to do this will result in a fixed penalty fine.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, pupils with attendance of less than the agreed target (Worked out over a twelve month period) will not be considered.

If the pupil goes on holiday, which has not been approved by the school, the absence will count as unauthorised and can result in a fine.

The school will only authorise up to 10 days leave of absence, in any school year. (Pupil registration Regulations 1995 - regulations 3 and 4).

***Parents are requested to avoid taking pupils on holiday, during term time, as far as possible.***

### **Illness during the school day**

A pupil may become unwell during the school day. Under these circumstances, in particular, pupils must not be given permission to go home by teaching staff. The pupil should be referred to the main office. Sending a pupil out of school, without contacting the parent/s in the first instance, could place the school in a difficult position in terms of its responsibility of care.

In the first instance, the Office staff will ensure that the pupil is seen by a First Aider. If the First Aider considers that the pupil should go home then the pupil's attendance needs to be investigated. If a pupil has an attendance percentage higher than 95% then they can go home without further consultation. However if they are below 95% and deemed to have a concern with attendance then clarification needs to be sought with the PM or DPM.

No pupil will be allowed to leave the school unless contact has been made with the parents. Only the Progress Manager or senior staff can give permission for a child to leave the premises unaccompanied. The office will then confirm the time and date of the child's departure in writing, recording it on a sheet: "Record of Pupils Sent Home." This is given daily to the Attendance Officer to update the pupils' records on SIMS.

### **Valid reasons for absence**

Normally, the following will be accepted as valid reasons for absence, if unavoidable during school time:

1. Illness. (I)

2. Medical (including dental or similar appointments). (M)
3. Compassionate Leave of Absence/other authorised absences (for example, funerals or other related events). (C)
4. Days of Religious Observance. (R)
5. Family Holidays (agreed with school and not exceeding ten days). (H)
6. Traveller Children- (for unavoidable absences authorised under the Green Card Regulations). (T)
7. Interviews. (J)
8. Works Experience approved by the school. (W)
9. School Directed Off-Site Activity. For example: college link courses for other educational activity e.g. music examination, specialist instruction, etc. (D)
10. Supervised School-Directed Study Leave. (S)
11. Periods of Exclusion. (E)
12. Placement at Referral Units. (D)
13. Participation in an officially recognised Sport or Competition (Run by the school). (P)
14. Staff training days. (X)
15. Enforced closure. (Y)
16. Educational Visit. (V)
17. Family holiday (Unauthorised or over 10 days). (G)

It is important to note that the school does not have to accept as valid the explanation offered for an absence. Where there is no explanation or where there are doubts concerning the validity of the explanation offered, the absence must be treated as unauthorised. The school will not under any circumstances accept a reason provided by the child or any other minor.

### **Procedures following an Unexplained/Unauthorised Absence**

A pupil's absence will initially be recorded as unauthorised with an 'N' entered in the register (no reason yet supplied). It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school concerning any absence but where an explanation is not supplied by 9.30am, the school will text home. The school will attempt to ascertain the expected length of absence in order that contact does not need to be made each day. Regular contact will be maintained until the pupil returns. Standardised letters are used where absences still remain unauthorised after the second week. (Letter Appendix A) These are actioned by the Attendance Officer. The EWO will invite parents for a meeting at school where an absence continues to cause concern.

LAs have a legal obligation to enforce school attendance and the EWO liaises closely with the Progress Managers. Where a pupil persists in non-attendance, the EWO will explore a range of strategies aimed at affecting an improvement. This will be done in conjunction with the school and may involve other agencies such as social services or the police. If, when these strategies are exhausted, non-attendance at school continues, then a prosecution may be undertaken by the LA.

**For unauthorised absences of 10 sessions or more in a rolling 12 week period and following a period of monitoring, the school can request that the LA issue a Fixed Penalty Fine in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct.**

V. Monitoring attendance/absence, identifying causes and implementing support strategies

All staff have an important role to play in monitoring pupils' attendance and punctuality and in supporting pupils' regular attendance.

It is important that pupils', whose attendance is poor, are actively supported and encouraged to attend school. Staff should treat pupils with poor attendance records (including known truants) sympathetically and give them every encouragement and assistance to catch up on work they have missed, even when it is by their own actions that the problem has been caused.

Pupils who already have a low opinion of school are unlikely to respond or improve to negative actions. This is not to condone truancy or absenteeism but to try and facilitate improvement by constructive, positive actions. Parents should always be encouraged to participate in any support strategy offered by the school.

**The Role of the Form Tutor with regard to attendance**

Form Tutors are responsible for promoting the general welfare and progress of all pupils within the Tutor Group. They can exert a very positive influence on the attendance rates of individual pupils.

Form tutors are expected to:

- convey to pupils, in their charge, the importance of good attendance;
- implement Lesson monitor accurately at the beginning of registration;
- counsel pupils when appropriate concerning attendance/punctuality matters; (examples would be: pupils who have unauthorised absences, patterns of non-attendance, excessive authorised absence, patterns of lateness etc.) and recording reasons for absences before informing their PM/DPM;
- inform the Progress Manager and attendance officer of any immediate concern or change of circumstances (personal issues/change of address) for pupils in the Tutor Group;
- attend the scheduled meetings with the PM.

**The Role of The Progress Manager with regard to attendance**

The Progress Manager, working with the EWO and Inclusion Manager, is responsible for employing a range of strategies to support individual pupils where attendance is a cause for concern.

Progress Managers will;

- manage and lead all staff, within the Year group, on attendance matters;



- analyse data, set targets for improvement, and implement/develop strategies to address identified issues;
- update regularly electronically the EWO by ensuring all concerns and interventions are logged in the relevant documentation folder.
- interview and counsel pupils - sometimes with the Lead Attendance Officer or EWO;
- place pupils on attendance report, set individual targets and inform parents by letter or telephone. Monitor progress;
- meet with parents and pupils, where attendance gives serious cause for concern to discuss strategies for improvement. Refer to the Inclusion Manager.
- undertake joint home visits with EWO when appropriate
- attend fortnightly meetings with EWO
- provide the Assistant Head with updated reports on individual pupils on a half termly basis in order to review strategies with the EWO and Inclusion Manager and involve, as necessary, other professional services e.g. Educational Psychologist, Behaviour Support, Joint Assessment Services.

### **The Role of Senior Lead with regard to attendance**

The Assistant Head will:

- be the Strategic Lead for all aspects of this policy;
- take responsibility for attendance matters 11-16;
- lead, develop and monitor attendance and punctuality procedures within the school, including updating the attendance policy;
- liaise with the EWO and other agencies as necessary;
- provide up-to-date information on attendance issues to staff within the school;
- liaise with office staff as appropriate;
- deliver reports to the Senior Management Team and Headteacher for weekly SLT and Attendance Focus Group meetings. As and when required for Governors' Reports;
- meet with the Headteacher to evaluate progress/problems and plan future developments.

### **The Role of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO)**

The school has an Education Welfare Officer allocated to the school by the LA.

The EWO meets fortnightly (formally) with each Progress Manager and the Assistant Head and is very much an integral member of the staff team. They are actively involved in working closely with the Pastoral team on attendance, punctuality and other welfare matters. The school works in line with the protocols for referral set down by the LA.

The EWO duties include:

- providing advice, support and guidance to pupils and parents to improve attendance at school but also to address disaffection and promote inclusion.

- establishing close links between home and school in order to develop relations and understanding between staff and pupils/parents and exchange relevant information.
- assist pupils in obtaining the maximum benefit from their educational opportunities.
- Inspection of school registers with the Attendance Officer to ensure the Pupil Registration Regulations are complied with, in line with LA and WG guidelines.
- advise parents of persistent absentees of possible legal action or Fixed Penalty Notices where appropriate.
- work with pupils who are educated off site to improve attendance and promote achievements and positive learning experiences.

The EWO has the statutory responsibility to prosecute parents who fail to meet their legal requirement in terms of their child's attendance at the school.

### **Attendance Officer Role 1**

Support operational arrangements and provide administration support for all matters relating to attendance and punctuality.

Duties include:

- updating registers and attendance information as it becomes available, monitoring the attendance database
- sending first day absence texting and calls
- produces a range of letters to be sent to parents on attendance and punctuality issues
- meet with EWO fortnightly to overview progress and discuss issues of concern or for development;

### **Attendance Officer Role 2**

- Monitor low attendance pupils
- Arrange meetings with pupils, parents, PM, EWO regarding any low attendance.
- Issue FPN warns/fines if appropriate
- Authorise holiday forms if attendance is 95% or over.
- Provide weekly data reports to PM/DPM on attendance
- Provide weekly data for SLT meetings (Attend meetings if appropriate)

### **The Role of the Senior Leadership Team**

The SLT will support all matters pertaining to promoting good attendance and punctuality of pupils. The Assistant Head will have the overview of attendance across the school and will advise the SLT on issues relating to attendance in years 7-11 and will report to the weekly SLT meeting.

The SLT will monitor attendance and punctuality through the school's systems and procedures and support staff in fully implementing the school's strategies.

### **Post -Registration Truancy.**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend and remain at school until the end of the school day. Schools are responsible for discharging a duty of care once a pupil has registered for a morning or afternoon session. It is therefore essential that every member of staff is mindful of this duty and that they exercise due vigilance with regard to monitoring the attendance of all pupils in their charge.

Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises during a morning or afternoon session unless they have the express permission from a Progress Manager or a Senior Member of Staff.

### **The procedures used for Lesson Monitor must be adhered to by all form tutors and subject teachers.**

The Attendance Officers will monitor the attendance of pupils throughout the day but it is also the responsibility of all staff to inform the office or Progress Manager if a pupil, who has been marked present in the previous lesson, does not attend their lesson.

Cases of post-registration truancy require immediate action. The Attendance Officers must initially establish whether the pupil is on the premises. If the pupil is on the premises but has not attended lessons (for example, they were in the toilets without permission) then the matter must be investigated and appropriate action taken. This will nearly always require contact with the parents. The school will then endeavour, in partnership with the parent, to avoid any recurrence.

If the pupil is not found on the premises, the case must be treated as an extremely serious matter. The parent must be contacted by the Attendance Officers immediately and other agencies may need to be alerted if the whereabouts of the pupil cannot be established (Police/social services etc). The Assistant Head (or in absence Deputy or the Headteacher) must be alerted immediately concerning the matter.

Once the pupil is found, the school will work in partnership with the parents to avoid any recurrence.

### **Punctuality and Lateness**

The school makes every effort to encourage good habits of punctuality and to discourage lateness. The range of measures employed includes:

- Praise and encouragement for pupils who attend punctually.
- Attendance Officer - role 2 - to Interview pupils (and where necessary their parents).
- Flexible and sympathetic responses to occasional and unavoidable lateness.

- Use of standard letters to remind late-comers of the importance of punctuality.
- Referral to the PM and placed on Attendance/Punctuality report. Parents informed by telephone or letter.

The school recognises two categories of lateness:

- a) before close of registers, marked as “L” and recorded as present.
- b) after close of registers, marked as U and recorded as unauthorised absence.

With regard to category “a” where lateness is a cause for concern, the pupil is interviewed by the relevant Progress Manager. and, if necessary, a detention may be imposed. Where appropriate, parents are contacted and a standard letter is available for this purpose. Where such lateness persists, a referral will be made to the EWO.

Any pupil who arrives late for school MUST ALWAYS register, either with their Form Tutor, or after registration time, with the Office.

### **Absence Related to Discrimination.**

A pupil’s absence from school may be due to discriminatory bullying. It is against the law for a school, governing body or the LA not to take action where this type of bullying takes place between pupils.

As a school, we are required to monitor and report on any discriminatory incidents each term and if the reason for the pupil’s absence is related to any of the above issues, we must take action to deal with the situation.

### **Long-Term Absence and Procedures for Return to School.**

In cases of prolonged absence, the school will seek to smooth the transition of pupils back into full time education. This may involve:

- Work forwarded to the pupil’s home (in cases of convalescence after illness, or exclusion) this is co-ordinated by the Progress Manager.
- Close liaison with the family via the Progress Manager and EWO.
- Involvement of the EWO and, if appropriate a Home Tutor (who may work with the pupil in the school surroundings).
- Modifications to the individual pupil’s timetable/curriculum.
- Additional support from subject teachers.
- Increased help and guidance via Learning Support. (This may involve placing the pupil on the ALN Register).

## **Rewarding Attendance**

All pupils are rewarded for high achievements in attendance, but also those pupils with improved attendance should also be rewarded. The baseline criteria are set at the start of the academic year.

In all Year groups a certificate, based on 100% attendance, is presented termly.

Following a review with the Progress Manager, the form class in each year group achieving the highest attendance, for each term, will be given the opportunity to take part in a school activity that in some occasions may be funded by the school.

## **Monitoring, Evaluation and review**

The school's success in securing good levels of attendance and punctuality is regularly monitored by the Assistant Head. This is done on a weekly to annual basis.

This is also supported by evaluations undertaken by the Senior Leadership Team and the Governing Body. Strategies are constantly reviewed for improvement and amended as deemed appropriate.

The Governing Body receives termly reports on the levels of attendance, authorised and unauthorised absences for each year group and the school as a whole. Governors use this information to monitor attendance, to set and monitor attendance targets for the school and to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the school's strategies for improving attendance.

## **Review of this Policy**

This policy will be reviewed and amended in the light of practice, advice received and any changes to government policy.

The attendance policy and procedures are reviewed annually by the whole school.

Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

## **Absenteeism**

### **A Background Document**

Absenteeism is regarded as non-attendance at school, be it authorised or unauthorised (truancy).

Truancy covers a range of kinds of absenteeism including:

- Long-term absenteeism
- Sporadic absenteeism
- Unauthorised absence for any reason
- School phobia
- Post-registration truancy (internal and external).

Truancy causes concern because students are unlikely to fulfil their potential if there are significant gaps in their attendance. Regular non-attenders may also disrupt the progress of others when present because they have fallen behind and need extra help from teachers. They may also be exposed to physical or moral risk and, of course, unauthorised non-attendance is illegal.

#### Features of Non-attendance

Recurring characteristics of poor attenders include one or more of the following:

- Often lonely and unhappy
- Tend to be low attainers
- Often in trouble in school for poor behaviour
- Separated/divorced parents
- Parents often have negative attitudes towards school
- Poor, overcrowded housing
- Come from large families
- Bullying
- Unemployment in the family.

Clearly schools need to improve home-school liaison and to be aware of the above characteristics that may put students (by no means all of them) at risk of becoming truants. Schools can, and do, make a difference to attendance rates, usually by the cumulative effect of a whole range of measures, most of which are quite small.

#### Other Factors relating to Attendance

- Registration is the time of day when the two key elements in an effective school come together: the welcoming school and the well-organised school. Together they can ensure the meticulous keeping of accurate records and the fostering of a climate in which students feel that their attendance is both important and appreciated. Whatever the record of a student's attendance, her or his return should receive a welcome free from any trace of sarcasm!
- Induction of new staff should include a session on attendance procedures and policy.
- Supply teachers should have access to accurate class lists.
- Speed of follow up is important.
- Rewards for good attendance should be used – improvement as well as constantly good figures. It should be noted that the expected 95% for schools is often 98% in industry!

- Let parents know of positive improvements in attendance, as well as when their child is a cause for concern.
- Comments on attendance should be made in reports.
- EWO should be selective in home visits and should liaise with the ESL department to obtain translations of standard letters etc into any community languages.
- Links with outside agencies should be regularly evaluated
- Post registration truancy usually reflects a dislike of particular lessons and/or teachers, though the burdens of coursework may also be a contributory factor. Lesson-by-lesson attendance checks can pick this up, but staff should also challenge and report students seen around the school during lessons to the respective Progress Manager. Such truants rarely dislike school in general, so finding out why students dislike particular lessons is also important.
- Lateness may also start some students on the slippery slope to truancy. We need to set clear, consistent expectations and sanctions should be in proportion to the offence. Remembering a teacher example is a powerful influence on standards.
- There is evidence to suggest that where schools are able to effect sustained improvement in rates of student attendance, then teacher attendance improves too. This suggests that a whole school approach to attendance should also monitor staff attendance.
- Long-term absentees must be helped to catch up on missed work eg by the use of photocopying.
- Phobics or school refusers are children who refuse to go to school and usually receive help from an educational psychologist. Once back at school extreme patience is needed in the recovery period, which can take months or years. A safe place at school where the child can go may help.
- Improving teaching and learning is at the heart of any discussion on how to keep students in schools. Regular, systematic checking will ensure that more and more students remain physically in school, but they can still opt out mentally unless they feel they are learning interesting and worthwhile things.

#### Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Tackling Low Performance

The Schools' Inspectors highlighted 7 main areas that schools should consider. These were:

- Use detailed information, such as that provided by computerised school management systems, to target resources and action.
- Make sensitive arrangements to re-integrate students into classes after an absence.
- Leave the most difficult cases to agencies such as social services, and devote more time to the larger number of winnable cases.
- Give priority to following up selected instances such as absences of more than three days, or younger students who show signs of being 'at risk'.
- Monitor how often a student is absent, as well as whether absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- Maintain close links with the LEA and social services to address the problem. Schools with a large number of difficult cases should request additional EWO time from the LEA.
- Ensure that rewards for attendance provide an incentive for all students, especially those with poor performance.

NB In addition to this background document you should also refer to the Attendance Policy, the Internal Truancy Policy and to guidance in the School Handbook on registration procedures.



## A Staged Response to Students with a Poor Attendance Record

These procedures are in addition to our normal first day phoning

Stage	Responsibility		
1	Pupil	Trigger	Being given their current attendance % figure by their Form Tutor on a Tuesday to ensure it is above target.
		Response	To ensure attendance at school every day and keep absence to a minimum. To write their attendance in their planner and have it signed by a parent each week.
2	Form tutor	Trigger	On the Tuesday of each week look at all students' attendance.
		Response	Make sure all pupils note their attendance in their planners. Ensure last week's attendance has been signed off. Identify any pupil with a cumulative attendance rate of less than 95%.Tutors will investigate the problem by talking with the student to establish reasons for the poor attendance pattern and if applicable agree a plan to improve the situation. Make note of all conversations in SIMS (Behaviour management/ 8 Initiatives) If the FT feels that there is a concern then they should inform the DPM . DPM will advise FT as to the way forward whether that be a parental phone call home or referral to Attendance Role 2 for Parental meeting.
3	Deputy Progress Managers	Trigger	On the Wednesday of each week look at the students in the GREEN attendance group (over 95%), and those identified by the FT who have not improved their attendance.
		Response	Identify the name of any students on the green list whose attendance has dropped, – address any concerns, if applicable contact parents to express the school's concerns (in co-ordination with AO2). The telephone call/meeting should attempt to establish a valid reason for the absences and most importantly a plan to improve the attendance in future (see Guidance notes). A record of the conversation / meeting and its outcome should be recorded on SIMS. All information should be passed onto AO2. (N.B. Legal action may be started for serious cases).

4	Progress Managers	Trigger	On the Wednesday of each week look at the students in the YELLOW attendance group 90 – 95% and those identified by the DPM who have not improved their attendance.
		Response	Identify the name of any student on the Yellow list whose attendance has not improved and if applicable contact parents to express the school’s concerns (in co-ordination with AO2). The telephone call/meeting should attempt to establish a valid reason for the absences and most importantly a plan to improve the attendance in future (see Guidance notes). A record of the conversation / meeting and its outcome should be recorded on SIMS. All information should be passed onto AO2. (N.B. Legal action may be started for serious cases).
5	Attendance Officer Role 1	Trigger	Daily monitor of registers, identify any absent pupil from Amber and Red group. Produce weekly attendance reports for Form Tutors, DPM and PM
		Response	Notify Inclusion Manager/EWO of any absence relating to at risk pupils.
6	Attendance Officer Role 2	Trigger	On the Thursday of each week investigate students in the Amber group (85 – 90%) and Red group (under 85%) and those identified by the PM who have not improved their attendance.
		Response	Identify the name of any student on the Amber list, if applicable contact parents to express the school’s concerns. The telephone call/meeting should attempt to establish a valid reason for the absences and most importantly a plan to improve the attendance in future (see Guidance notes). A record of the conversation and its outcome should be recorded in SIMS. A formal letter should be sent to parents inviting them to a meeting about their son/daughters attendance. At the meeting an agreed plan to improve the situation is made, the legal requirements of school attendance are stressed at these meetings. This plan and the students attendance will be reviewed weekly. Weekly meetings to be held with EWO. Threat of Fixed Penalty notifications.
7	Inclusion Manager	Trigger	Pupils identified with a need which falls outside of the normal attendance policy as directed by the Headteacher or their designated attendance Senior Leader.
		Response	The Inclusion Manager will investigate the nature of the specific needs of the pupil (and family). As a result although normal attendance policy still applies, the Inclusion Manager will place a note on their file to highlight any special considerations. The rest of the team will therefore be informed. Any needs identified will lead to the Inclusion Manager making appropriate referrals to enable effective multi-agency support. Inclusion Manager will liaise with any outside agencies to ensure a clear pathway plan and clear and concise information sharing. Work with relevant staff and professionals to implement re-integration programmes when appropriate.

8	Governor	Trigger	At the request of the school
		Response	To attend a meeting held at the school, where parents of identified pupils will be requested to comply with the attendance policy of the school with immediate effect or to be considered for permanent exclusion from school (N.B. not for poor attendance, but for failure to follow the reasonable school policy.)

Education Welfare Officer	Receive referrals from Attendance Officer Role 2 only. Feedback any relevant information on referred cases.
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## **Managing Attendance**

### **Interviews with Parents - Guidance for Staff**

We need to be more active in the pursuit of students whose attendance is below expectations. In addition to a battery of telephone calls and letters the school must establish face to face contact with parents of poor attenders. The forum for this is the target setting interview.

#### **The purpose of the interview is to: -**

- Explain expectations of attendance.
- Link high attendance to student achievement.
- Emphasise the value of having the student in school.
- Establish a working partnership with parents.
- Set agreed attendance targets.
- Listen to parental concerns.
- Identify ways of encouraging attendance.

#### **Identifying an attendance problem.**

- The most important document will be the register. This will identify attendance on a day to day basis. It also identifies reasons for attendance. Not all students with poor attendance can be identified for attendance target setting for instance:-
- Some students have an identifiable health problem. They should not be targeted for attendance issues unless there are compelling indications to the contrary.
- Students who have been repeatedly excluded should not be targeted for attendance interviews; they will be managed as part of the normal process and will have targets set relating to their work and behaviour.
- Some students are permanently withdrawn by their parents for other reasons. They should not be targeted but should be referred to EWO.
- Red Group students who are being targeted by the EWO
- Amber Group students who are being targeted by the AO
- Yellow Group students who are being targeted by the Progress Manager
- Green Group students who are being targeted by the Deputy Progress Manager

#### **Attendance problems vary.**

There may be a high rate of condoned absence. This will usually be identified as a medical problem (M) on the register. Typically the condoned poor attenders will regularly take a day or two off every week or fortnight, with the occasional longer absence. Notes will be non-specific and students will

rarely go to the doctor. Sometimes condoned absence involves students being involved in caring for a member of the family, doing shopping, housework or even working.

Some students may be absent from school without parental knowledge. Normally the register will show a large number of "reason for absence unknown" marks (N) and "late" (L), which will become unauthorised absence (O) on the register. There will be a large number of half sessions recorded, with students not in school in the morning but attending in the afternoon and vice versa. There are also students who combine actual illness with a high rate of condoned absence, or who both truant and persuade their parents that they are sick.

Using the attendance certificate it is possible to make a judgement about a student's attendance pattern. It is important to study the certificate in advance, as strategies will be different if the parent

wants their child to go to school and has no idea they were not attending, or if they have kept the child at home to baby sit while they work.

It is also possible to identify improving and declining trends using the register. These trends should be identified with parents and students.

### **The Attendance Interview.**

The purpose of the attendance interview is to acquaint parents with the facts and to set targets for poor attenders. It is important as far as possible to build a co-operative relationship with parents to help them get their kids to school.

The following phrases are prompts to aid Staff in talking to parents and students about attendance. Some fit different scenarios and different interviewers and interviewees.

#### Setting the scene

- We are concerned about your/Charlotte's attendance.
- I want to work with you to try and improve her attendance.
- Last year your/her attendance was only 75%.
- We are concerned because last term your/Charlotte's attendance went down to 65%.
- We want you to improve your attendance to 95%.
- Here is a copy of the attendance summary.
- You have been late 20 times. Is there a problem with getting up in the morning?
- As you can see you/she seemed to be ill every week.
- Has she been to the doctors? Can you get a medical certificate?
- Looking after the children, going shopping, off for the birthday, is unauthorised absence and against the law.
- The school is not allowed to count that as an authorised absence.
- Have you seen the educational welfare officer?
- Do you know where Charlotte was during these unauthorised absences?
- Is there a place you can be called when she does not come to school?
- Can you think of a way of keeping in touch?
- Why don't you come to school?

#### Setting the targets

- What can we do to get your daughter to school?
- How can we improve your attendance?
- Have you thought of using pocket money as an attendance reward?

- The suggested parental attendance rewards are 95% = £5, 100% = £10
- I will telephone in two weeks to discuss how the attendance has improved.
- You can come to see me if you feel ill.
- You know that most children in Britain attend over 90%
- Why do you feel ill so often?
- If Charlotte is really ill every week it must be very serious and she should go to the doctor.
- We should have a doctor's certificate if Charlotte is ill so often.
- Can you send her to school even if she demands not to go?
- If you are bullied you must tell someone here.
- I know you feel bullied but you must attend school.
- Bullying is important but your attendance is even more important
- When we have agreed on your attendance targets I will listen to your bullying problems and write them down.
- We can get someone to ring you up before school.
- We telephone whenever someone is absent.

### **Targets**

- To register in the morning.
- To attend 100% for the next two weeks.
- To carry your homework planner.
- To get your report signed.
- To attend all next week.
- To tell someone when you feel bullied.
- To remain in school once you have got here.
- To attend all lessons next week.
- Bring a doctor's certificate whenever you miss school
- To attend registration every day for the next two weeks

If you have concerns about interviewing a particular student and their parents then refer to the Progress Manager for guidance. Try and be clear about your concerns. The Progress Manager may choose to do an interview with you, but it is their job to advise, not to carry out the interview.







Congratulation

s

on your  
excellent  
attendance.

100% attendance achieved by

**Belong . . .**  
**Believe . . .**  
**Achieve . . .**

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Oakdale  
BLACKWOOD  
NP12 0NU  
01495 233600  
ihsca@caerphilly.gov.uk  
www.islwynhigh.org



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Executive Headteacher: Dr H Duncan

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Chair of Governors: Mr C Gore

Parent / Carer of «chosen\_forename» «chosen\_surname» «reg»

«date\_of\_printing»

«address\_block»

## **Irregular Attendance Warning!**

**«percentage\_attendance»%**

Dear «salutation»

Our records show that «chosen\_forename» has a pattern of irregular attendance. Without doubt irregular attendance prevents students from achieving their full potential. They are more likely to achieve higher standards in terms of examination success and the skills needed for a happy and productive life.

It is of course often the case that absence from school is unavoidable, and in recognition of this the Islwyn High Governing body have set a target of 95% for pupil attendance. As «chosen\_forename»'s attendance has fallen below this level we feel that we should bring this to your attention in case you would like to discuss the situation further.

As a school we have responsibility and a commitment to work with parents to resolve issues that may prevent regular attendance. A falling attendance figure, especially in the form of a number of single-day absences, is of concern to the school and parents. Persistent absence can cause pupils to fall behind with work, which in turn makes them reluctant to attend.

Should you wish to discuss this matter please do not hesitate to contact us at school.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer  
01495 233600

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**Believe . . .**  
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Executive Headteacher: Dr H Duncan

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Chair of Governors: Mr C Gore

Parent / Carer of «chosen\_forename» «chosen\_surname» «reg»

«date\_of\_printing»

«address\_block»

## Attendance Below 95%

Dear «salutation»

### **RE: «forename» «surname» «percentage attendance»**

I'm sure you will be aware of your legal responsibility to ensure «chosen\_forename» attends school regularly and punctually to gain the maximum benefit from their education. We are pleased to be able to continue to work with all our Islwyn High School families. In an effort to do that we try our best to keep parents/cares informed about school policies and protocol.

«chosen\_forename»'s current attendance is **«percentage attendance»** due to this being below the school target of 95%, any future absences **will NOT be authorised by the school unless supported by written medical evidence.**

This can take the form of a letter from the GP / hospital, sight of a prescription or an appointment card / letter/text message/email. Failure to provide this information will result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. As a school we do use the Fixed Penalty Notice process, poor attendance without appropriate reasons could result in you getting a fine.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely

Attendance Officer  
01495 233600

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Executive Headteacher: Dr H Duncan

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Chair of Governors: Mr C Gore

Parent/Carer of

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear

Name of pupil:                      Date of birth:

I have reviewed                      's attendance record and am concerned to note that she has incurred at least 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling 12 week period.

I enclose a copy of                      's attendance record and remind you that as a parent/carer of a child who is a registered pupil at this school, you have the legal responsibility for ensuring your child attends regularly and punctually.

All schools share the Welsh Government's determination to raise levels of pupil attendance and achievement in order to ensure the best possible start in life for our children.

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice for each of their children, who fail to attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice is an early deterrent intended to prevent more extended periods of unauthorised absence developing and incur a fine of £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice will result in prosecution under the Education Act 1996.

I can therefore advise you that the school will be monitoring your child's attendance for 15 school days from the date of this letter and should any further unauthorised absence occur, consideration will be given to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Support and guidance regarding attendance is available from school or the Local Authority, however should you have any specific queries in relation to this letter, please contact me on the above telephone number.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Hicks  
Headteacher