

St Iltyd's Catholic High School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2014-15

‘Every hour and every day in school is crucial in contributing towards the future success of the young people in our care’.

‘Attendance and punctuality really matters!’.

APPROVED BY FULL GOVERNORS 17TH MARCH 2015

St Illtyd's Attendance Policy (AP) 2013-14

1. Introduction and aims

1.1 A child's success and progress at school is always positive if their attendance levels are high. On the other hand those who do not attend regularly will inevitably fall behind in their learning and this can lead to feelings of frustration and unhappiness. On average a pupil with 90% attendance (100 missed hours of education) will drop a level or grade in every subject.

As a Catholic High school, we seek to provide a Christian environment in which all young people want to attend every day so that they can flourish as members of a happy, caring and safe community.

It is our goal that students, parents and families **aim for 100% attendance and that they never fall below 97% attendance** so that all lessons are attended and all target levels achieved. We also feel strongly that as a Catholic family we need all our pupils in attendance so that relationships can develop and the Catholic ethos of the school can truly permeate the lives of the young people in our care.

1.2 At St Illtyd's non-attendance is a very significant issue that is treated very seriously.

Every missed hour and day is a missed opportunity and is in a worse-case scenario a form of child neglect. However, every case is different and we will always try to support families to improve the situation and to ensure attendance levels improve to above 97%.

The St. Illtyd's 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 97% attendance.

1.3 The St. Illtyd's attendance policy will:

- Give attendance and punctuality a very high priority.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities for students, tutors, teachers and all staff to ensure consistency and rigour.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to families.
- Use attendance data systematically to evaluate success.
- Use rewards to celebrate good attendance.
- Use sanctions sensitively and only when necessary.
- Work in partnership with the Education Welfare Service to improve attendance.
- Support pupils returning to school after significant periods of absence.

2. Rights, responsibilities and roles

2.1 The St. Illtyd's AP 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.

2.2 St. Illtyd's 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.

2.3 Parents are required under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, to ensure that their child receives effective full-time education.

2.4 Cardiff 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.

2.5 The St Illtyd's attendance policy is written to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and in the understanding of life based on the Christian faith as taught by the doctrines of the Catholic Church.

2.6 The St Illtyd's attendance policy will work in partnership with young people, parents and families so that pupils can benefit from the educational opportunities provided to them at school. Key members of staff include:

- Assistant Headteacher (Strategic Lead)
- The current Education Welfare Officer. (EWO)
- KS3 School Attendance Support. (SAO)
- KS4 School Attendance Support. (SAO)
- Our 35 Form Tutors.

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

3. Registration procedures

3.1 To ensure accuracy and consistency, all pupils are registered electronically via the Capita School Information Management System (SIMS).

3.2 Pupils are registered within the first ten minutes of each lesson and during the period of the day set aside for collective worship. Pupils' attendance is therefore recorded on six occasions during the school day.

3.3 Teachers and cover Supervisors are each provided with login credentials for SIMS and are required to record present (/) or absent (N) against each pupil's name. No pupil may be left with a 'missing' mark.

3.4 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

3.5 Teachers, Cover Supervisors and Supply Teachers are permitted to use the following registration codes only: Present (/), absent (N) and late (L).

3.6 The Attendance Officers, Admin staff and Senior Leadership lead 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
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
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)

Where pupils are not required to attend school the additional codes X, Y, Z and # may be used.

- **Extended periods of absence.** If a student is absent from school for family, religious or travel 'home' reasons and this is an extended period of absence.
IN such cases the student will be taken off roll, the family would have to re- apply and there would be no guarantee that they would be re-instated on return.

Procedures for absence and lateness

3.7 Parents are asked to contact the school by telephone on the first day of their child's absence. Admin staff in conjunction with our SAO's monitor telephone calls each morning.

3.8 Should a pupil be absent from school without explanation, a text message will be sent to parents asking them to make contact with the school. **If a student continues to be absent**

the School attendance support team will contact the parent/guardian to discuss the issue further.

3.9 Should the school be unable to ascertain the reason for absence, a letter will be sent to parents seeking explanation (See section 4, 'Hierarchy of Sanctions').

Authorisation of absence (holidays are always unauthorised)

3.10 Absences may only be approved by authorised representatives of the school. The St Illtyd's attendance policy exercises caution in the authorisation of absence and parents must seek to provide the school with a full picture of the reasons leading to their child's absence.

3.11 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, in law, have to apply for permission from the school in advance.

Family holidays will not be authorised unless there is an exceptional circumstance. (0.1% chance) In such cases the parent/guardian will still need to inform the SAO of the length of absence.

Attendance staff acknowledge that a funeral or wedding would normally be authorised but still regarded as an absence.

3.12 When assessing requests for leave, the Attendance team and Assistant Headteacher will consider:

- The time of year of the proposed trip;
- The length and purpose of the holiday;
- The duration of the holiday and its impact on continuity of learning;
- The circumstances of the family and wishes of the parents; and
- The overall attendance pattern of the child.

4. Intervention

4.1 The St Illtyd's attendance policy recognise the important role that parents play in promoting good school attendance. The school therefore seeks to provide professional, quality information and advice, communicated frequently by text message, leaflets, pupil planners, parents' evenings, school reports and the school website.

4.2 The St Illtyd's attendance policy operate a 'same day contact' scheme in an attempt to prevent prolonged absence and encourage pupils to return to school promptly.

4.3 The St Illtyd's attendance policy operate a 'late at the gates' scheme in an attempt to discourage lateness and identify pupils who are persistently late for school.

4.4 SAO's monitor post-registration attendance lists in an attempt to identify instances of truancy. In such cases, SAO's alert the Senior Leadership Team and telephone parents so that action can be taken to locate missing pupils and return them to safety.

4.5 The Attendance Officer, in collaboration with the Educational Welfare Service and South Wales Police, conducts regular 'truancy sweeps' in Cardiff City Centre and throughout the east side of the city.

4.6 Where concerns are raised by parents or staff about a pupil's school attendance, the Attendance Officer will make a home visit to discuss the matter in an environment which many families find comforting. During the home visit the Attendance Officer provides information and advice and seeks to support the pupil in returning to school.

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

4.8 The Attendance Officer works closely with the three main feeder schools to ensure that good school attendance is maintained at critical times (such as the Key Stage 2 to 3 transfer). The Attendance Officer also ensures that attendance and punctuality is given a high priority throughout the duration of pupils' compulsory education.

4.9 Good attendance is celebrated at the end of each term as part of the school's 'celebration assembly'. Certificates, chocolate and a range of reward vouchers are given to those students achieving 100% attendance and above 96% attendance.

Hierarchy of sanctions

4.10 St Illtyd's is a caring school and we 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 in parents the support deemed necessary to encourage pupils to attend school, sanctions may be used. In the first instance, parents 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 the school has taken the decision not to authorise an absence;
- Advise them that the Attendance Officer 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 (see 4.11);
- Advise them that a referral has been made to the Educational Welfare Service (see 4.12).

4.11(i) **In some circumstances, the school may request that the Educational Welfare Service issue parents/carers with a Fixed Penalty Notice under The Education (Penalty Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2013.** This policy has been directed by the Welsh government and Local authority not by the school. St Illtyd's must comply with this ruling as there will be strong criticism from the LA if students are shown to be absent for 10 days or more with no use of the FPN warning system and fines. (Due to take effect from January 2015)

A warning letter will first be sent if:

- **Parents/carers have failed to engage in attempts to improve attendance and...**
- There have been 5 days or more=10 unauthorised sessions within one school term;
- A child has been late on 10 occasions within one school term;
- The police have regularly found a pupil to be absent from school without an acceptable reason.

*** St Illtyd's attendance team will focus heavily on establishing strong relationships with all stakeholders. The aim will be to engage with students and parent/guardians to overcome issues and to ensure attendance improves. This is the pivotal difference in approach at our school, we want to work with our community and build relationships that foster improved attendance rather than ruin relationships with an immediate fining approach. This does not mean we will be hoodwinked or naïve in our approach as we are passionate that every hour and every day counts for the future success of the young people in our care.**

Warning notices and consequently fines will therefore be prioritised for parent/guardians that fail to communicate effectively or co-operate. (E.g explain absence, answer calls, attend meetings, and get their child to school following a warning)

4.11(ii) A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued if:

- There is one further unauthorised absence within 15 school days of a warning letter having been issued;
- An unauthorised holiday is taken during term time (note that no warning letter will be received). This FPN will be issued immediately for anyone taking a 1 week holiday but holidays for less days could still be punished with a fine if the general level of attendance is low or there has been a problem with engagement.
- The FPN of £60 will be charged by the Education Welfare Services.
If two students from the same family take a holiday in term time the parent/guardian will be fined twice.

If the fine is not paid in 28 days then the fine will double to £120. If this is not paid within the agreed amount of time then parents will face prosecution.

4.12 When our SAO's feel 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 might 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.

4.13 The St Illtyd's SAO's will liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the evidence required to prosecute parents 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.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

5.1 The Attendance Officers and Admin staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for each pupil. Registration data is recorded using SIMS and details of interventions and strategies are recorded by the SAO's in confidential files.

5.2 The Attendance Officer is required by the Assistant Headteacher to produce detailed accounts pertaining to the attendance of pupils upon request. This is achieved by publishing reports using SIMS and through utilising CORE data sets/FFT Live.

5.3 The Attendance Officers meets weekly with the Assistant Headteacher of St Illtyd's Catholic High School to discuss attendance strategy and if necessary individual cases of absenteeism, truancy or lateness across the cluster. The Assistant Headteacher and SAO's then reflect upon the effectiveness of interventions to date. Decisions are taken at this time as to whether individual cases meet the criteria for referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

5.4 The Attendance Officer meets with the Educational Welfare Officer every week to review cases and seek support. The Educational Welfare Officer is responsible for contributing to St. Illtyd's drive for school effectiveness through providing advice on proven good practice and promoting the school's Attendance Framework.

5.5 Attendance data is reviewed at the end of each month by the Senior Leadership lead and is used to populate the Self-Evaluation document and inform the School Improvement Plan.