

# **School Attendance Policy**

# Clever Fish Attendance Policy

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## **1. Aims**

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Excellent school attendance is one of the best ways of preparing a student for success both in and out of the classroom. It promotes healthy life habits and supports academic attainment.

A student with a high attendance record is more like to feel settled within their school community and is better equipped to develop important social skills and friendships.

Students who miss just a couple of school days per month are more likely to fall behind their peers both academically and socially.

## **2. Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of The Education Law, 2016 (Law 48 of 2016), The Education Regulations, 2017 and refers to their statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

This Policy also aims to meet the standards of the Successful Schools & Achieving Students documentation from The Cayman Islands Government's Successful Schools & Achieving Students (June 2018).

### **3. School procedures**

#### **3.1 Attendance register**

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day after students return from lunch. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

At High students must arrive in school by 7:30am on each school day

The register will be taken at 7:40am and will be kept open until 7:55am.

#### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8:00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

#### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing school for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

#### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A student who arrives late after the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. Teachers will follow up with parents in the first instance where students are regularly late. If lateness persists a senior teacher will meet with parents.

### 3.5 Following up absence

The Clever Fish Attendance Manager will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. 4

Unexplained absences will be followed up that day by the form tutor.

Non verified or unexplained absences will be recorded as unauthorised at the end of each month if no explanation has been provided by the parent.

### 3.6 Reporting to parents

The school reports to parents on their child's attendance record at least twice per year.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### 4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The school may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as events or problems which are unexpected and which stop a student being able to perform to the best of their abilities in their learning. For example, bereavement, unexpected personal or family problems or illness might be considered as an exceptional circumstance.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Examples of unauthorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- A term-time family holiday
- Overseas family events
- Overseas visitors on island
- Flexi-schooling requests will be authorised in exceptional family circumstances

### 4.2 Legal sanctions

As a school we are obligated to report attendance to the Department of Education School Attendance Officer if:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

## **5. Strategies for promoting attendance**

We believe, and evidence, supports that high student attendance is directly linked to student wellbeing and academic performance. The school therefore promotes and celebrates high attendance through various strategies.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The School's designated Attendance Managers will monitor student absence data and publish flagged students at the end of each half term. Students with exceptional family or medical circumstances will be referred to the Principal.

In unexplained circumstances, if a student's attendance drops below 94% in one term, the Attendance Manager will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If there has been no significant improvement within a set fixed period, further action will be taken, as outlined below. If after contacting parents a student's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving the Department of Education School Attendance Officer.

- Phase 1: Teacher letter
- Phase 2: Pastoral letter and Teacher/Pastoral/Parent meeting
- Phase 3: Principal letter and Pastoral/Principal/Parent meeting
- Phase 4: Director and/or outside agencies involved

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The Head-Teacher**

The Head-Teacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it if needed.

The Head-Teacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and report to external services where appropriate.

### **7.2 The Attendance Manager**

The Attendance Manager:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal

## **8. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## Attendance codes (All)

Red indicates High School only <b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late after register has closed (8:00am)
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/ trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work Experience	School organised work experience
<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
Q	Examinations	Student sitting examination during school hours
D	Counselling	Counselling within the school
E	Excluded	Student excluded from school
J	Interview	Students are attending education interviews
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
O	Unauthorised holiday/ circumstances	Pupil is away for a holiday or other activity that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or