



Maximising Attendance Policy

August 2023



Purpose and Vision

The purpose of this policy is to provide all stakeholders with a framework which offers guidance and strategy to maximise pupil attendance. Our aim is to promote very good attendance at school. Absence from school, whatever the cause, negatively impacts learning.

We expect all members of our school community to contribute to a positive school ethos which encourages and supports excellent attendance. Our school values underpin our approach to maximising attendance:

RESPECT

KINDNESS

AMBITION

It is the responsibility of all pupils, parents and staff to ensure that our school community provides a safe, welcoming and enjoyable learning environment that encourages excellent attendance. This will promote high attainment, positive sustained destinations and support the safeguarding and wellbeing of our pupils. Working together we will achieve our school vision:

Our vision at Castlehead High School is that we are:

Cultivating a community of respect, equity, and kindness, fuelling ambitious minds to thrive and make a positive impact in our world

In Castlehead High School we are committed to ensuring that our pupils:

- Experience high quality learning and teaching;
- Gain skills for learning, life and work;
- Are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens;
- Are supported fully by parents/carers, the school and partner agencies; and
- Have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.

Principles

The principles of Maximising Attendance within Castlehead High School are:

- We will promote positive relationships amongst all members of our school community and ensure everyone feels safe in a nurturing environment; we will continue to strive for Rights Respecting Schools accreditation.
- We will provide opportunity for all pupils to be included, engaged and involved in their learning; this is particularly true of our care experienced young people and we will adhere to the principles of The Promise.



- We will work in partnership with pupils, parents and other agencies to eliminate barriers to promote excellent attendance and positive outcomes for all pupils as necessary;
- We understand good attendance increases positive outcomes and therefore pupils will only be excluded as a last resort and time for planning is required;
- We are committed to providing an appropriate education for young people of secondary school age and will support pupils and parents to maximise attendance in accordance with law (Education (Scotland) Act 1980);
- We respect the rights of children and young people as paramount (Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014);
- We respect the rights of children and young people with additional support needs (The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended));
- We will support effective communication, including sharing relevant and proportionate information, where appropriate, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998; and
- We will share information where appropriate and work jointly to make sure we are co-ordinated and cohesive in all that we do.

The Education (Scotland) Acts

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 creates a duty on Castlehead High School to provide adequate education and guidance to young people of secondary school age. The act also places a duty on parents to provide education for their children along with a justifiable explanation for non-attendance within 48 hours of an absence from school. Where appropriate, we have a duty to work with other authority agencies, namely Social Work, to ensure all pupils attend school.

In accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act (2016), Castlehead High School, working with the Renfrewshire Council, the pupil and their parents, may reduce the prescribed 25 hours of learning each week, if found to adversely affect the extent to which the pupil is or would be:



- Safe;
- Healthy;
- Achieving;
- Nurtured;
- Active;
- Respected;
- Responsible; and
- Included.

Attendance is defined as the participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by Castlehead High School, including:

- Attendance at school;
- Learning out with the school provided by a college or other learning provider (e.g. Flexible Learning) whilst still on our school role;
- Educational visits in conjunction with the school;
- Interviews and visits relating to further and higher education or careers events;
- Debates, sports, musical or drama activities in conjunction with the school;
- Study leave for pupils participating in the SQA diet of examinations;
- Activities in connection with psychological services, learning or behaviour support and nurture;
- Receiving tuition via hospital or outreach teaching services; and
- Work experience.



High Expectations

In Castlehead High School we are fully committed to ensuring all pupils will secure a sustained positive destination which will enable them to effectively contribute to their community and live a full happy and healthy life. We fully agree with the correlation between positive school attendance and time-keeping and positive outcomes and therefore encourage excellent attendance and time-keeping by promoting a 'work approach' which requires pupils and parents to treat school like the work place, ultimately aiming to reduce unnecessary absences and lateness. We challenge pupils and parents to maintain excellent attendance and time-keeping and provide support when concerns arise. Through rewards ceremonies, we celebrate pupil achievements in relation to their attendance.

Other Learning Provision

In exceptional circumstances, providing an educational experience based in Castlehead High School may not be the most appropriate provision for an individual pupil in order to meet their learning, social and emotional and overall wellbeing needs. In such circumstances we will work with our school Educational Psychologist and Renfrewshire Council's Inclusion Support Officer, through our Extended Support Team Framework, to explore appropriate alternative placements. These may include Flexible Learning or other privately provided bespoke education providers.

Providing for pupils during long-term illness

In accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and amended Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000, we will work with Renfrewshire Council's Inclusion Support Officer to access outreach teaching or home tuition from the Discontinuity Team.

We will maintain contact with the pupil and their family through home visits from the school's Inclusion Support Assistant or Homelink Team. Castlehead High School staff will provide appropriate work to be sent home to enable the pupil to maintain meaningful learning, if appropriate.

Pastoral Support and Learning Support staff will work with the pupil and their family to ensure a timely and successful return to school, whilst ensuring the pupil's needs are being met.

Children missing in education

Through building positive relationships with pupils and their families, we encourage parents to alert us in advance of any planned absence or within 48 hours of unplanned absences.

We understand that family circumstances can change and that there may be complex reasons which requires a pupil to move without notice, however, our first concern is to ensure the pupil's safety and wellbeing. If a pupil does not present at school without any



reasonable explanation and there are concerns around the pupil's welfare, our Child Protection procedures will be followed.

If a child does not present at school for up to 4 weeks and we are unable to make contact with the family through Pastoral Support and Homelink staff, we will initiate the Children Missing in Education procedures as outlined by Renfrewshire Council. Based on knowledge of the pupil's personal circumstances these steps may be initiated prior to four weeks.

Care Experienced and Vulnerable Pupils

We will work closely with a range of internal and external services to ensure the needs of care experienced and vulnerable pupils are met to enable them to attend school. We will protect pupil dignity by being

discreet about supports in place and through being mindful of the impact of when and where meetings/hearings take place. As part of our commitment to nurture we will relentlessly attempt to build positive relationships with pupils as we recognise that positive adult and peer relationships along with recognising and supporting their talents and potential can lead to increased self-esteem, resulting in improved attendance and ultimately better achievement.

As part of our targeted approach, we monitor the attendance of care experienced and vulnerable pupils every period and ensure that any discrepancies are checked immediately. Where a child is found to be missing, appropriate steps are taken including contacting parent/carers, social work and police as necessary.

Targeted pupils with historical poor attendance and their families will work with our Inclusion Support Assistant to identify barriers and build positive home-school partnership which will enable supports in place to bring about improved attendance.

Attendance beyond school-leaving age

We encourage pupils to remain at Castlehead High School for a fifth and sixth year. This time allows pupils to grow and develop not only academically, increasing their chances of a positive destination, but also provides a safe environment to continue their personal development. Our expectations of senior pupils with regards to attendance remains unchanged from S1-S4. Pupils in S5 are expected to follow a full timetable with pupils in S6 being expected to follow a minimum of 4 courses provided their remaining time is timetabled for contribution to the wider school community or work experience.

At the beginning of S5 and S6 pupils and parents are made aware of these high expectations and asked to sign a contract of agreement to the terms of continued enrolment. If a pupil does not comply with the agreed terms set out, the pupil and parents/carers will be invited to contribute to plans for improvement in attendance or a potential move into further education or the workplace.



Pupils in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance are expected to fulfil 100% attendance in all classes. It is the responsibility of pupils to provide medical notes or self-certify any absence.

Exclusion

In keeping with the key messages set out in *Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2*, a positive approach to managing school exclusions, grouped with The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and Getting it Right for Every Child 2008 and The Promise, we are committed to minimising the number of exclusions for all pupils.

Only in extreme circumstances where there is a significant need for planning to allow the pupil in question to continue to access education in Castlehead High School in a safe way that also enables learning to continue within wider school, will a pupil be excluded. Any exclusion will be for as short a time as possible and will not exceed four days without agreement from Renfrewshire Council.

Every measure will be taken to avoid this and to find alternatives to exclusion, particularly when relating to care experienced pupils. Pupil welfare will be a main consideration and discussion will take place with social work prior to a collaborative decision being made.

We are committed to reducing the number of exclusions by:

- Providing a positive ethos and culture;
- Building positive relationships and embracing nurturing approaches;
- Providing stimulating learning and teaching using differentiated approaches to meet all learners' needs;
- Adhering to and promoting our Relationships Policy;
- Adhering to and promoting our Equalities policy;
- Parental engagement;
- Providing key adult support;
- Early and staged intervention;
- Curriculum for Excellence;
- Partnership working; □ Professional values and personal commitment to social justice, integrity, trust and respect; and
- School Leadership



Authorised Absence

In Castlehead High School, we may authorise absence when we are satisfied by a legitimate reason provided by the parent or carer via a note, email or phone call. Some reasons which may be accepted include:

- Illness – short term where no further provision is required;
- Medical or dental appointments;
- Meetings prior to, and in, court;
- Attendance at, or in connection with, a Children's Hearing or or appointment with another service provider, e.g. social work;
- Religious observance;
- Bereavement;
- Weddings or funerals of those close to the family;
- Arranged absence in relation to children in Traveller families;
- Participation in non-school debates, sports, musical or drama activities agreed by the school;
- Lack of school provided transport;
- Exceptional domestic circumstances;
- Period of exclusion;

Unauthorised Absence

We will record absence accurately, in particular, in situations where no satisfactory reason has been provided absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Examples are likely to include:

- Most family holidays – unless there are exceptional circumstances as outlined previously;
- Parent/carers condoned absence where Castlehead High School does not agree with there is a satisfactory reason;
- Truancy, with or without parental/carers knowledge;



- All other unexplained absence;
- Longer-term exceptional domestic carer circumstances where support has been provided; and
- During disputes, such as relating to the return of a pupil after an exclusion.

Responsibilities of Pupils

- Pupils are expected to attend all classes every school day and on time.
- Pupils are aware of the dangers of truancy and the negative impact absence has on their learning.
- Pupils are encouraged to take a 'work approach' to attendance; that is they should only absent themselves when their health is too poor to attend school.
- Pupils are expected to and encouraged to share any concerns which may affect their wellbeing and may impact their attendance with their key adult (their Pastoral Support teacher).
- Pupils are also expected to engage meaningfully with supports put in place to meet their needs.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers will make arrangements for their child to attend school every day and on time. Parents/Carers will actively encourage positive attendance and not condone absence through minor ailments in line with a 'work approach' to attendance. Parents/Carers will work in partnership with the school and engage with Castlehead High School and other service supports in place. Parents/Carers will notify the school of any planned absence including the reason. All unplanned absences should be reported on the day with a reason to the school office followed up by a telephone call to Pastoral Support or a letter or email.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff

There is a statutory duty placed on all staff to record pupil attendance accurately. Staff are required to verbally call out the class register and accurately complete the recording of pupil attendance on SEEMIS. On rare occasions when SEEMIS is unavailable, classroom teachers should complete a paper register and send this to the school office. Registers should be completed within the first TEN minutes of a lesson.

To encourage positive attendance, teachers are expected to build positive relationships with all pupils regardless of previous experience. Teachers should create a positive learning environment by welcoming pupils into the class and encouraging them to succeed by expecting the best from every pupil. Teachers will be nurturing in their approach to pupils. Lessons will be interesting, relevant and differentiated to meet pupils' needs.

Classroom teachers must highlight any concerns to the appropriate Pastoral Support teacher as they arise to aid early intervention.



Responsibilities of Pastoral Support teachers

As the allocated Key Adult for pupils, Pastoral Support Staff will build long lasting positive relationships with all pupils in their case load. Pastoral Support staff are central to gathering information about pupils and identifying their additional support needs.

- Be aware of early signs of concern which may cause absence, to allow preventative support to be arranged;
- Develop positive relationships with pupils and parents to ensure difficulties are discussed and resolved;
- Respond quickly to absence, to ensure pupils are safe and well;
- Follow up on pupil absence prior to changing TBC to ensure appropriate absence code.
- Liaise closely with Pastoral Support Teacher/HomeLink/ISA to give regular updates.
- Attend weekly House meetings to discuss pupils of concern.
- Use the Staged Intervention process to ensure consistency of actions taken: this includes calling home, attendance meetings with pupils and parents, and sending attendance letters.
- Support reintegration into learning on returning from absence.

Pastoral Support staff will liaise with their House DHT during weekly Stage One meetings if there are any concerns relating to attendance.

Further support will be sought from the DHT Pupil Support if Stage Two supports are required.

Although every case is different the following criteria will be used for guiding staged interventions and supports:

	Attendance Rate	A
	On unauthorised absence	A text message will be sent to the parent/carer on the morning of absence to alert parent/carer to call the school office
	Change in attendance over course of a day	A text message will be sent to parent/carer to advise pupil attendance has changed and for them to call school office.



Stage 1	Periodic truancy	Truancy letter
	Persistent late coming	Late coming letter to be sent when required
	90%	Letter 1A 2023 sent and parental phone call
	85%	Letter 1B 2023 sent and parental phone call.
Stage 2	80%	Letter 2 invite to TAC
	75%	Refer to EST
	Subject to engagement	<p>Possible outcomes include:</p> <p>Refer to ESG</p> <p>Request a Multi-agency Child Planning Meeting</p> <p>Referral to Scottish Children's Reporter Association (SCRA)</p>