

Coalway Community Infant School

Pupil Attendance and Absence Policy



Reviewed annually

Date implemented: September 2023

Review date: September 2024

Signed

Chair of Governors:

Date:

Statement of intent

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education elsewhere.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence, in advance, from the school.

Coalway Community Infant School believes that to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas - such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium - can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils, and parents.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents, and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils, groups of pupils or cohorts that require more support.

1 Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2022) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education'

- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

2 Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the Attendance Lead to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when deciding to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Process in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Ensuring regular review of attendance data.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff members are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Accurate completion of the school's attendance registers.

The Attendance Lead is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision and strategy for improving attendance.

- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents about attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.
- Ensure that the attendance policy is on the school's website and is communicated clearly to parents.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Ensuring that their children attend school daily when school is open.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Notify the school in line with missing education processes as soon as possible when their child is unexpectedly absent because of sickness.

3 Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

4 Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school day starts at 8.45am; pupils will be able to access the classroom from 8:35. Lessons begin by 8:55am. Pupils will have a morning break at 10:45am which will last for 15 minutes. There will be a lunch break at 12pm which will last until 12:55pm – pupils will be expected to have returned from each break and be ready to recommence learning at the stated times.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked by 8:50am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark
- The morning register will close at 9:00am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1:05pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present

5 Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone (01594 833457) or by email to admin@coalway-inf.gloucs.sch.uk before **9:15am** on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register at 8:55 to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

In the case of PA or where a child is at risk of becoming PA, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the Attendance Lead. The school will inform the LA, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 90 percent, the Attendance Lead will be informed, and a formal meeting will be arranged with the pupil's parent.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

6 Attendance register

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school (other authorised absence)
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered - at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances (partial and forced closure i.e. severe weather)
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

7 Authorising parental absence requests

There are occasions when exceptional leave will be requested. Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account considering the pupils attendance record. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents and will not deny any request without good reason.

Leave of absence

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. To have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to complete a request for absence form, available from the school office, at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence. The form will provide the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be considered. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. The school is not likely to grant a leave of absence for the purpose of family holidays.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

Please note: this is not an exclusive or exhaustive list.

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in a sanction, such as a penalty notice. Fixed Penalty Notice: If a pupil has over 10 sessions (5 days) of Unauthorised Absence/late after the register has closed in a 10 week period each adult with parental responsibility may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60.

More information can be found here: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2102803/gcc-penalty-notice-code-of-conduct-revised-30-september-2020.pdf>

The school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

Performances and activities, including paid work

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which allows the child to perform. Applications for this type of work will need to be made via the usual absence request form available from the school office.

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that they are suitable for the pupil.

Headteacher's permission must be requested for any such absence. Where there are concerns that the absence may cause education to suffer, school will liaise with the Local Authority

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller absence

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

8 SEND- and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the schools SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities, and programme of work.

- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

9 Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the Attendance Lead responsible for attendance will:

- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
 - Sending letters to parents.
 - Having a weekly review with the Class Teacher.
 - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
 - Using fixed penalty notices.

The school will use attendance data, in line with the 'Monitoring and analysing absence' section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

10 Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance, and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services, and health professionals.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence, and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially, and developmentally. In this school this is done through targeted parental phone calls and meetings.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the Attendance Lead responsible for attendance will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, e.g. bullying, the Attendance Lead will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the Attendance Lead will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

11 Persistent Absence (PA)

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and Persistent Absenteeism, such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether an EHC plan may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have high rates of absence and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

12 Legal intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils' attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after a 6-week period, the Attendance Lead will consider:

- Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school's point of contact in the Education Inclusion Service.
- Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
- Engaging children's social care where there are safeguarding concerns.

Where attendance still does not improve, the school will work with the LA to take forward legal intervention. This course of action is always a last resort.

13 Monitoring and analysing absence

The Attendance Lead responsible for attendance will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for:

- The school cohort as a whole.
- Individual year groups.
- Individual pupils.
- Demographic groups, e.g. pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds.
- Other groups of pupils, e.g. pupils with SEND, LAC, and pupils eligible for FSM.
- Pupils at risk of PA.

The Attendance Lead responsible for attendance will review the school's data weekly to check for emerging issues. On a half termly basis the Attendance Lead will undertake a thorough analysis of the above data to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

The Governing Board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

14 Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 97%.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2024.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Coalway Community Infant School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. Attendance is discussed by classroom teachers. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the Attendance Lead.
2. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the Attendance Lead daily.
3. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.
4. If a pupil's attendance falls to 96 percent, the Attendance Lead speaks to the parent to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can help to improve their attendance.
5. If a pupil's attendance falls below 96 percent, a letter is sent home raising concerns that their attendance has fallen below the school's expected standard. The letter also has an attached leaflet outlining how parents can work with the school and their child to improve attendance.
6. The Attendance Lead tracks the pupil's attendance carefully following this discussion. If the attendance improves the Attendance Lead phones home to thank the parent for working with the school to address this.
7. If a pupil's attendance continues to fall and drops below 90 percent, a second letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being formally monitored, and the Attendance Lead contacts the parents to discuss this.
8. The pupil's attendance is monitored for two weeks and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parents are required to attend a meeting in school with the classroom teacher and set targets for their child. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, the school may contact Gloucestershire's Education Inclusion Service; who will discuss next steps. In the event that parents cannot attend a meeting in school, the Attendance Lead will seek to resolve this through use of other mechanisms such as a Teams meeting or finding a time outside of the school core hours.
9. After the two-week monitoring period, and if targets are met, a letter is sent home from the Attendance Lead to congratulate the pupil and their parents on improving attendance. Monitoring and communication with the parents continues until attendance stabilises to 96 percent.
10. If targets are not met, the Attendance Lead makes a referral to the LA Education Inclusion Service and a decision is made as to the next steps that will be taken to safeguard the pupil. In line with the DFE guidance this could include a Parenting Contract, an Education Supervision Order or prosecution. Prosecution is the last resort but can result in a fine of up to £1,000. The Decision to prosecute remains solely with the LA as an independent prosecuting authority. If the pupil has an allocated social worker or is a looked-after child, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.