

Wool Church of England Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

Committee:	Achievement
Policy Ratified:	July 2020
Review Date:	July 2023

Additional School Procedure / information	
Committee:	FGB
Procedure Adopted:	February 2021
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1. General Principles

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to promote regular school attendance so that pupils are enabled to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to children's achievement and general wellbeing.
- 1.2 All children of compulsory school age have the right to an education. In law, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school. It is the responsibility of the school to positively promote regular attendance, monitor pupils' attendance and intervene where there are concerns.
- 1.3 This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance understand their role. The policy stresses the commitment that all schools in CLP have to enabling the best possible attendance for each and every child. CLP schools are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers and other external agencies to ensure that all children benefit from regular attendance.
- 1.4 Schools within CLP will endeavour to:
 - Create a school environment that children want to be a part of
 - Emphasise the positive reasons for full attendance
 - Recognise and acknowledge good attendance, including infrequent attendance achieved in very difficult circumstances (e.g. chronic illness)
 - Through careful and systematic monitoring of attendance, identify and act upon difficulties at the earliest stage, working closely with parents and carers
 - Avoid acrimony and disappointment in connection with requests for absence through clarity and consistency in dealing with children and families

2. The legal position

Absence from school is a legal matter. By law, all children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at a school must attend full-time and be punctual. Only schools (not parents) can authorise pupil absence from school if they are satisfied with the reason provided by the parent. The Local Authority can instigate legal action where a child's attendance is a cause for concern.

3. Why is regular attendance so vital?

- 3.1 There is a clear link between low attendance at school and low achievement. Government figures show that attendance level at primary school has a clear impact on achievement, even at the end of secondary school:
 - Of pupils who fall below 50% attendance, only **3%** will achieve 5 good GCSE passes
 - Of pupils in the 80%-90% range, only **35%** will achieve 5 good GCSE passes
 - Of pupils below 95%, only **73%** will achieve 5 good GCSE passes
- 3.2 School absence can very quickly add up to lost learning time. The following table indicates the number of school days lost at different attendance levels:

Attendance level	Number of school days lost	Impact on pupil
96% or above	Less than 10 days absence a year	These pupils benefit from strong overall attendance and are well placed to make good progress at school.
90%	19 days absence a year	Pupils in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.
85%	29 days absence a year	Pupils in this group are missing six weeks of school per year and their progress will be significantly hindered. Absence below 90% is seen as persistent absenteeism.
80%	38 days absence a year	Attendance at this level is the same as missing a full year of school every five years.

4. Positively promoting strong attendance and punctuality

- 4.1 Staff show pupils that their contribution to the school community is valued. They endeavour to make school a fruitful and enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered. Through this, first and foremost, it is hoped that most children will want to attend school regularly in the first place.
- 4.2 In addition to this core principle, this school uses the following strategies to positively promote and recognise good attendance:
Breakfast Buddies is offered to eligible families to ensure punctuality and to improve attendance. Staff also support families through proactive collaboration with agencies such as the family partnership zone.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Partnership Board

- Ensure that a policy is in place which reflects the latest government legislation as well as the requirements of the relevant local authority.
- Have an awareness of the Partnership's overall performance with respect to pupil attendance through interrogating regular reports to the Achievement Committee.
- Ensure that appropriate measures are in place to bring about improvement where individual school's attendance levels are lower than they should be.

5.2 Local Governing Body

- Ensure that the school's procedures and arrangements reflect the requirements of the Partnership Policy.
- Be aware of the school's performance with respect to pupil attendance by interrogating regular reports from the Headteacher, at least termly.
- Where the school's attendance performance is identified as some cause for concern (amber or red on the Partnership RAG, for example), in addition to the above, ensure an even closer understanding of the school's attendance work and improvement strategies through the appointment of an 'Attendance Local Governor' who can achieve deeper and more regular insights and report to the LGB.

5.3 Executive Headteacher or Headteacher

- Be responsible for the school's performance with respect to pupil attendance.

- Ensure that robust arrangements are in place to enable each child to benefit from the highest possible attendance level, as per the requirements of this policy.
- Ensure that the school's arrangements reflect the requirements of this policy.
- If not the Headteacher directly, ensure that that a senior leader within the school has oversight of attendance.
- Ensure that adequate staffing arrangements are in place to undertake the attendance tasks outline below.

**5.4 The following routine attendance tasks are undertaken by this post holder at this school:
Emma Robinson**

- Ensure that registers are taken as required by legislation.
- Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for attendance registration on days where the school's normal routine may be disrupted (for example off site learning).
- In addition to the register, ensure that systematic records are maintained for all matters and correspondence related to attendance.
- Provide attendance information as requested by staff and external partners and certainly for the half termly attendance monitoring meetings;
- Make day to day attendance checks on those pupils whose attendance has been identified as requiring regular monitoring and flag concerns quickly;
- Ensure the school's arrangements for First Day Contact are robustly followed, always especially mindful of those children identified as 'vulnerable';
- Be the school's main regular link with the Local Authority's School Attendance Worker or equivalent;
- Maintain a close link with the Senior Leader with oversight of attendance.

5.5 All staff

All staff have a duty to informally monitor the pupils' attendance and to report any concerns they may have. In this way, pupil attendance is being monitored in the schools at all times.

5.6 Education Social Worker within Coastal Learning Partnership

The Partnership has an appointed Education Social Worker (ESW) who can support schools in bringing about improved attendance where a school's own capacity may be limited given high demands, or where a school requires expert advice and guidance related to a specific family. The extent of the Partnership ESW's involvement with a school will be determined in part by the extent of the service provided by the school's Local Authority (see section 5.9): schools which have a fuller service provided by their LA are likely to require less support from the Partnership ESW. Typically, the Partnership ESW can support schools in ways including but not limited to:

- Advise schools of appropriate actions to take with particular families where attendance is low and especially where the pupil meets the DfE definition of persistent absence;
- Support senior leaders in the development of strategies to improve attendance overall;
- Undertake 'safe and well' visits where there are safeguarding concerns and a child is absent from school;
- Work more directly with families where attendance is a significant concern and where the school has not been able to bring about improvement. This may include:

➤ Regular contact with the family including through home visits;

- Undertaking initial assessments to further understand the cause of low attendance;
- Hold formal meetings with parents to agree ways in which attendance must increase and set attendance improvement targets;
- Refer/sign post families to external agencies

5.7 The Partnership ESW will not undertake those activities which are the statutory duty of Local Authorities. For example, penalty notices, prosecution and other legal activity can only be brought about through the relevant Local Authority.

5.8 **Other key roles supporting attendance within this school are:**

Ellie Griffiths - Headteacher

Tash Hardy – SENCO

The Pastoral Team

5.9 **The role of the Local Authority**

Schools will work in close partnership with the Local Authority. Local Authorities have statutory duties with regard to school attendance and they can be found in [DfE guidance](#). If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs. Local Authorities may also issue penalty notices as an alternative to the prosecution of parents. Local Authorities are required to publish a Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices. The code should set out the criteria that will be used to trigger the use of a penalty notice. When requesting that the Local Authority issues a penalty notice, CLP schools will do so in consideration of the relevant code and this is summarised in appendix 1.

5.10 Schools are supported with attendance by their Local Authority in other ways: principally, this involves supporting schools with more challenging cases of low attendance or where families might require multi-agency support.

6. Tracking and monitoring overall attendance performance.

6.1 At the end of each half term, schools will capture their attendance through headlines figures which will include:

- % Absence overall (and % authorised / unauthorised)
- % of pupils defined as 'persistently absent'
- % Days lost due to term time leave (and % of those authorised / unauthorised)
- In the above, comparisons between 'all' and 'FSM' and 'Latest national'
- Patterns of lateness

In this way, schools will formally track their attendance position within the year and over a rolling three-year period.

In schools where attendance is cause for concern, analysis will drill deeper into other groups such as year group, SEND and so on.

6.2 This information will be reported by the Headteacher to the Local Governing body.

7. Monitoring attendance of individual pupils and responding to attendance concerns.

Each school within CLP will undertake regular and systematic monitoring of pupil attendance.

7.1 Monitoring of attendance is a continual process and action may be triggered at any point where a concern is raised. However, typically the following process outlines how attendance is monitored:

- Formal monitoring will take place by all schools on a half termly basis through a meeting of the relevant senior leader with other staff who have a key attendance role (as outlined in section 5.4)
- At each half term, consideration will be given to pupils according to the 'tiered response' outlined below.
- Agreed actions for pupils will be identified; where required, further advice will be taken.

7.2 There is a tiered system to respond to low and/or falling attendance levels:

- a) Attendance below 96%: A standard letter is typically sent to any parent/carer whose child's attendance has dropped below 96%. This letter is for information – it notifies the parent/carer of this attendance level and explains that the school will continue to monitor their child's attendance. (Where the cause for a pupil's attendance dropping below 96% is very specific and clearly known and evidenced to the school, the school may decide that such a letter is not required or appropriate. For example, where a pupil has had a known and confirmed medical issue and where this is the only substantial cause for the lower attendance. In such circumstances, the pupil's attendance will be closely monitored – further reduction in attendance may prompt this initial letter, without the need to wait for the next formal half-termly review).
- b) Attendance between 90% and 96%: The standard letter described above may be used again where a pupil's attendance sits at this level. This letter may be used twice in succession but it assumes that the school has engaged in other dialogue with the family in between, either through telephone conversations, informal school gate discussions or through less formal meetings. However, if attendance remains at this level for a third time, it will be treated as for attendance which is below 90%.
- c) Attendance which is below 90%: Attendance at 90% equates to 19 days absence through a year and is considered to be **persistent absence**. In such circumstances, parents/carers will receive a specific letter which very clearly identifies that the attendance level is a significant cause for concern (except for in exceptional circumstances where the attendance may not be a cause for concern such as known medical condition). Parents/carers are requested to attend a meeting, the purpose of which is to explore the reasons for their child's low attendance and formulate a plan for improvement. The content of this meeting will be used to draw up an attendance improvement plan which will be shared with the parents/carers and a review date will be agreed. Participants in that meeting will vary according to the circumstances but may often involve staff such as the Education Social Worker, Headteacher or other senior leader, class teacher, SENCo and Pastoral Care Worker. The school may well engage the Local Authority. At this stage, schools should make it known – and confirm in writing - **that absences cannot be authorised without medical evidence unless there are exceptional reasons which render this inappropriate** (for example, a known medical condition); schools cannot routinely authorise absence where a child's attendance has reached this level of concern and this will be explored at the meeting.
- d) Attendance which continues to decline from below 90%: Unless there are exceptional circumstances, schools will not be routinely authorising absences at this stage. If attendance is not showing reasonable improvement within four weeks of the last communication to parents/carers, then schools will take further action which will involve

further meetings with the parents/carers. It is likely that a referral for further intervention by the Local Authority will be appropriate; certainly, advice from this team will be sought.

- 7.3 Schools can request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice for persistent absenteeism. This would be issued when a pupil has failed to attend school regularly over a six-week period (when his/her attendance has fallen to 90% or below). The absence may comprise a series of single or half day unauthorised absences or a block of unauthorised absence for reasons such as reported illness where no evidence has been provided. Consideration will also be given as to whether attendance has been regular prior to this period. It is necessary for the school to issue each parent/carer with a formal warning letter that a penalty notice request is being considered, giving a defined period of not less than 15 school days for the attendance to improve to an acceptable level, prior to any request for a Penalty Notice.
- 7.4 These figures expressed as % attendance levels are intended as a *guide* for the tiered response but they are not absolute and it will be necessary for school to exercise some judgement. Schools will also take other factors into account when deciding how to manage attendance. For example, schools will consider *patterns* of attendance which may trigger concerns such as frequent broken weeks or repeated similar absence such as a pupil who is absent every Friday. Schools may decide to intervene whenever they have concerns, taking these guidelines into account. Schools will communicate with their Local Authority as appropriate at any stage if there is particular concern about a child's attendance.
- 7.5 During the autumn term, schools may also take account of the end of previous year attendance picture when determining actions against the tiered response. For example, a child whose attendance has dropped below 96% but for a single period of approved and unquestioned absence and where the previous year's position was 96% or above, a school may judge that an attendance letter is not yet required and continue to monitor closely.
- 7.6 Schools are provided with a support pack which includes template letters and proformas as required to support this tiered approach. Schools should amend these to meet their own requirements.

8. Requiring medical evidence

- 8.1 Schools cannot routinely authorise absence for pupils where there are attendance concerns. Before requiring parents/carers to provide medical evidence, parents/carers will have been notified in writing according to the tiered response. The requirement to provide medical evidence would typically be discussed with the parents/carers at an attendance improvement meeting.
- 8.2 Medical evidence may take many forms, depending upon the circumstances. Where a pupil has a specific medical condition which is clearly evidenced to the school (for example through an NHS paediatrician's letter), this can be taken as evidence for ongoing absences rather than requiring the parents/carers to provide evidence after every absence. However, if there are any doubts, the school will take advice from the Local Authority as it will be necessary to understand the level of attendance that could be reasonably expected with that particular condition. It may be necessary to request consent from the parent to discuss the child's health directly with the GP.
- 8.3 In cases where there is no confirmed underlying health condition, medical evidence can take whatever form the school deems as appropriate and might include: GP appointment card,

prescription or even the school's direct observation. Either way, if a parent/carers is required to provide medical evidence, absences will not be authorised without such evidence.

9. Managing lateness

9.1 The following table shows how quickly lateness can cause lost learning time:

Minutes late per day	= days of learning lost per year
5	3.2
10	6.5
15	9.5
20	12.5
30	19

9.2 If a pupil arrives at school after the start of the school day, they will be registered as 'late' (L): this is not an unauthorised absence and the pupil is counted as present for the morning session. Lateness which is 20 minutes or more beyond the start of the school day will be counted as an unauthorised absence (U) unless parents/carers provide the school with an acceptable reason.

9.3 CLP schools will also contact parents/carers if a child regularly arrives at school late. Teachers and other staff who notice a problem with punctuality will consult with the Headteacher before communication is made with parents/carers regarding the matter.

9.4 Persistent lateness will be addressed according to the particular circumstances; it is likely that persistent lateness will have triggered the previous low attendance measures. Advice regarding persistent lateness may be sought from the Local Authority.

10. Parents/carers notifying the school of absence and 'first day contact'

10.1 Parents/carers are required to contact their child's school on the first day of their child's absence and every day thereafter. If it is clear from the initial communication on day one that the absence will extend for a given period (for example, a child who has an infectious illness), it is not necessary for the school to be notified every day during the absence period but parents/carers must contact the school if the absence period becomes protracted. This is an important aspect of the schools' safeguarding procedures: if a child is not registered at school in the morning, then schools must satisfy themselves that the child is safe. It is therefore necessary for parents/carers to have contacted their child's school by 9.15am, giving a reason for their child's absence. This absence will then be recorded as authorised, provided that the reason for absence is significant and that there are no current concerns about the child's attendance.

10.2 Schools will contact parents/carers on the first day that a pupil is absent without explanation. This will be a telephone call, followed by an email if communication is not made via telephone. If no contact is made and there are safeguarding concerns, social care may be contacted.

10.3 The flow chart in appendix 2 outlines the steps that schools will take if they are unable to account for a pupil's wellbeing following their unexplained absence from school. At each stage of unsuccessfully attempting to contact parents/carers, schools should also use other registered contacts for the pupil in an effort to get hold of the parents/carers.

- 10.4 If the Headteacher has any cause for concern about the reason given for any absence, it will remain unauthorised until the matter has been discussed with the parents/carers and a satisfactory explanation secured. If the school does not accept the reason given the absence will remain unauthorised. For the absence to be authorised, there must have been no reasonable way in which the child could have come to school.

11. Appointments during the day

Parents/carers must avoid arranging appointments for their child during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents/carers must notify the school of the appointment details. A child should only be taken out of school for his/her own appointment—not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a child early so a parent/carer can attend an appointment for someone else.

12. Leave of Absence during term time

- 12.1 Following amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into effect 1st September 2013, Headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence from school in exceptional circumstances. The decision as to whether any request is considered as 'exceptional circumstances' rests solely with the Headteacher.
- 12.2 The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.
- 12.3 In considering whether or not to authorise a request for leave of absence in term time, the Headteacher will look at each individual case. A request can only be authorised if the Headteacher considers that the circumstances are exceptional. Additionally, any request should be made prior to the leave of absence and should be submitted to the school using the Request for Leave of Absence form available from the school. Parents/Carers may be asked to provide additional information/evidence or meet with the school to discuss the circumstances.
- 12.4 Only the parent/carer the child resides with can make an application for a leave of absence.
- 12.5 The following are examples of situations which *could* be considered as exceptional:
- Return of parent/carer from active service (forces)
 - Death or terminal illness of a parent/carer, step-parent or sibling
 - Young Carers
 - Disability or respite leave
 - Periods of obligatory religious observance
 - Attendance at a wedding or christening of an immediate family member ('immediate' defined as parents and siblings)
 - Other situations which might be considered as 'compassionate'
- 12.6 The following are examples of situations which would *not* typically be considered as exceptional:
- Family holiday / cheaper holiday dates
 - Educational visits arranged by family members during school time
 - Attendance at a wedding or christening (unless it relates to immediate family)

- Visiting relatives either abroad or in the UK
- Limitations on parents'/carers' leave entitlement or dates or parents'/carers' profession or place of work making it difficult to coincide school and work holidays
- A family member going for medical treatment abroad which could be reasonably carried out in the UK
- Child's birthday

12.7 School will not typically authorise any leave during May and June due to statutory assessments.

12.8 Parents/carers will be notified of the Headteacher's decision at the earliest opportunity.

12.9 If a leave of absence is taken but the school has not been able to authorise the absence because the reasons are not considered 'exceptional', the school will request that the Local Authority issues a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) in line with the criteria on appendix 1. These criteria have been determined in consideration of the relevant Local Authority's FPN code of conduct or protocol, which legislation requires them to have.

13. Off-site education or specialist provision

Where a child's special educational needs are recognised by the school, and special tuition/therapy not available in school is required, the Headteacher may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside school.

14. Absence for performance

14.1 The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for approved public performances provided that clear evidence is issued of the approved nature of this activity. The following will also be taken into account in reaching a decision:

- The nature and purpose of the performance
- The frequency of absence requested and the likely impact on the child's education and progress
- The child's attendance record

14.2 Where licenses are issued by the Local Authority, absences will be monitored to ensure that they comply with the permissions given in the license. Any concerns will be communicated to the School Attendance Worker.

15. Children Missing in Education

CLP's 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures' outlines the process to be followed if children are considered missing.

16. Informing parents of this policy

16.1 Schools within CLP will take all reasonable endeavours to ensure that parents and carers are aware of this policy. Parents and carers will be regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance as well as the implications of low attendance and of taking unauthorised absence.

16.2 This policy will be published on each school's website. All parents are sent a 'September Attendance Letter' within the first fortnight in each academic year which summarises attendance expectations including arrangements for requesting term time absence due to exceptional circumstances.

Furthermore, this school informs parents of its attendance expectations in the following ways:

- A letter is sent at the start of the year to inform parents and carers of the importance of attendance and expectations.
- Regular attendance reminders are sent via SLT throughout the school year.
- Where there are concerns regarding attendance families are informed on an individual basis.

Appendix 1: Arrangements for requesting a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) from the Local Authority

Schools will have due regard to the relevant Local Authority's FPN code of conduct or protocol, which legislation requires them to have.

Requesting fines for unauthorised term time leave:

If a period of five or more days (10 or more sessions) of unauthorised leave is taken, schools will request that the Local Authority issues a FPN.

During any 12-month period, if a parent takes their child on a 2nd period of unauthorised leave and if the 1st and 2nd periods of leave total 5+ days/10+ sessions, schools will request that the Local Authority issues a FPN.

During any 12-month period, if a parent takes their child on a 3rd period of unauthorised leave, regardless of total number of missed days/sessions, schools will request that the Local Authority issues a FPN.

Where the school has agreed to a specific number of sessions of leave due to exceptional circumstances, the school will request that a FPN is issued if additional leave is taken outside of the agreed period.

FPNs will typically be requested on a 'per parent, per child' basis. In practice, this means that schools will request a FPN based on the household which requested and/or took the period of leave. Typically, the school will request a FPN for the parent who completed the form/main carer and the other adult in the household (if there is one) who actively took part or knew of the leave. In the case of a single parent, only one fine will be requested.

Definition of parent

The definition of "parent" under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 includes all biological parents, whether they are married or not and includes any person who, although not a biological parent, has the parental responsibility and/or any person who, although not a biological parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent.

In addition to the above, schools can request a FPN in situations of persistent absence, as outlined in paragraph 7.3 of this policy.

Appendix 2

Procedure for all unexplained absences – if a child does not turn up for school and no reason has been given by the parent/carer by 9.15am.

