

Heart of the Forest Community Special School

Pupil Attendance Policy



Approved by:	HoF Governing Body	Date:	03.10.23
Last reviewed on:	June 23	Next review date:	June 24
Website:	Yes	Type:	Statutory

Aims and objectives

At Heart of the Forest School we believe that improving attendance is everyone's business and that providing a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn is the foundation of securing good attendance. Working together to put the right support in place at the right time, in conjunction with all staff in school, parents/carers, pupils, Gloucestershire County Council and other local partners, we aim to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.

Regular attendance is fundamental to the future success of children. We expect pupils to be in school for every session of the school day and for every day that the school is open.

Our objectives are to promote good attendance, ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled. By acting early to address patterns of absence we aim to reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence. Please see School Attendance leaflet – Appendix 1

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Roles and responsibilities

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9:15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Proactively engage with support offered informally or formally to help your child overcome any barriers to attendance
- Contact the school promptly with any worries or concerns that may lead to the child not attending.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend school appropriately equipped for the day

The governing body/academy trust board are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Hold the senior leadership team to account for the implementation of this policy

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Requesting the issue of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader, Lizzie Spowart, flw@heartoftheforest.gloucs.sch.uk is responsible for:

- Championing and improving attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Communicating messages to pupils and parents
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Where there is a lack of engagement, holding more formal conversations with parents and raising the issue of the potential need for legal intervention.

Lizzie is also the school attendance officer responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with school staff eg, family liaison officer/EHCP lead to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (or other member of staff authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting the information to the on SIMS, no later than 9:30am.

School administration staff and family liaison workers are responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the appropriate member of staff in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Keeping accurate and up to date records of calls and communication with parents

School processes for recording attendance and absence

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of each morning session of the school day and once during each afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
 - The original entry
 - The amended entry
 - The reason for the amendment
 - The date on which the amendment was made
 - The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 9am on each school day.

The register for the morning session will be taken by 9:15am and will be kept open until 9:30am.

The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1pm time and will be kept open until 1:15pm.

Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for an unplanned absence on the first day by 9:15am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school or completing an absence reporting form via ParentApp.

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer 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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Punctuality is monitored on a weekly basis via the attendance management report and parents will be notified and a meeting called if this becomes persistent or a pattern is forming.

Planned absence

- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

School require notification of planned absence in advance of the appointment. To notify school of this, a leave of absence request form should be completed on ParentApp.

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

- The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the school's leave of absence in exceptional circumstances request form accessible on ParentApp. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- 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

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Procedures following unexplained absence

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent or carer, the administration team or FLWs will endeavour to make contact with the parents or carers to ask why their child is not in school. They will telephone all contacts. The Pastoral Lead will be informed and the transport service (if applicable) will be asked if they know of a reason for the absence.
- If still absent on the second day, an attempt to make contact will be made again via the telephone. If no contact is made a letter will be sent to parents and carers asking that they contact the school to explain their child's absence.
- If we are seriously worried about the child's safety it is possible that we would contact Social Services or the police to inform them of the child's unexplained absence from school.
- The schools pastoral lead or FLW's may do a home visit to check the welfare of the child.
- School must inform the Local Authority if a pupil has had a period of 10 or more days unauthorised absence or if the pupil fails to attend regularly.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

Strategies for promoting attendance

As a school we recognise that there are barriers to attending school for many reasons. For the purpose of this policy we follow GCC guidance to support children and young people experiencing barriers attending school. <https://www.goucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/educational-psychology-service-eps/information-for-schools-parents-and-professionals/guidance-to-support-children-and-young-people-experiencing-barriers-attending-school/addressing-barriers-to-school-attendance-and-outlining-definitions/>

- Involvement of teachers, Phase Leads, FLWs and pastoral support assistants in attendance action plans and monitoring.
- Introduction of attendance action plans when a pupil's absence is 80%.
- Ensure a robust system is in place to reward positive or improved attendance where appropriate.
- Home learning to be consistently supplied to ensure that education isn't missed through lack of attendance.

- Appropriate well-being intervention to be identified for those experiencing anxiety relating to school. This could be delivered by pastoral support assistant.
- Reward activity to be offered on a Friday afternoon to reward attendance that has been agreed and achieved.
- Develop an options curriculum element for Key stage 4 pupils to incorporate a wider range of activities to engage students.

Flexi-schooling/ part-time placements:

Flexi-schooling is a combination of attendance in school and home education. Schools may enter into flexi-schooling arrangements provided they correctly mark children as absent in attendance registers when they are being educated at home. Schools use Code C for this arrangement. Heart of the Forest School will require a formal written arrangement/contract for the flexi-schooling arrangement between parents/carers and school.

This agreement will cover:

- The days/times when the child will attend school, and when flexi-schooling will apply.
- Reasons why flexi-schooling has been agreed.
- Agreement that the parents/carers are responsible for the child's safety during this time.
- Arrangements for contact, liaison and review between parents/carers and school.
- Heart of the Forest school reserve the right either to agree to an extension of the flexi-schooling arrangement or to terminate it.

Attendance data monitoring, reporting and analysing

The school will:

- Regularly inform parents of their child's attendance levels termly via a letter.
- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

- Provide regular attendance reports to senior leaders, FLW's, pastoral support assistants and class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families where necessary.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Attendance improvement meetings will be held and AIM plans written, along with parent contracts. All parenting contracts will contain:
 - Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
 - A statement from the school and/or local authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
 - A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

The requirements specified, and the support provided, will depend on the individual case, and should be tailored to the needs of the individual parent and family.

There is not, therefore, a prescribed list, but requirements may include:

- Measures to ensure the pupil attends school or alternative provision punctually and regularly
- Requiring the parent to attend meetings with the school and/or local authority
- Accessing or partaking in the support or programmes offered
- Working with or accessing other separate support provided to the pupil at school level
- Formalise support or use legal sanctions, in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council, for example through using a parenting contract, engagement with social services, Education Supervision Order or consideration of attendance prosecution in the Magistrates Court

Legal sanctions

The school can request Gloucestershire County Council to issue a fine to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Fixed penalty notices are issued in accordance with the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

If issued with a fine or penalty notice each parent must pay £60 (per child) if paid within 21 days rising to £120 thereafter. If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice – note there is no right of appeal in court by parents against a fixed penalty notice.

In Education Law (Section 576 of the Education Act 1996) 'parent' means:

All natural parents, whether they are married or not

Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or pupil

Any person who has care of a child or pupil ie lives with and looks after the child

Links to other policies and monitoring arrangements

Safeguarding

Behaviour

Pupils with Medical Needs that Can't Attend School.

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is update, and as a minimum annually by Pastoral Lead. At every review the policy will be approved by the full governing body.

Appendix 1.

What can you do to help?

Take an interest in your child's education.

- Ask them about their day and praise and encourage their achievements at school.
- If your child is missing school or is seemingly unhappy, you should discuss your concerns with your child.
- Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of them missing school, but be on the alert for any particular reasons for non-attendance, such as bullying or problems with school work.

Contact the school as soon as possible when a concern is identified so that you can work with them to resolve any difficulties.

Be willing to engage with any support offered by the school or Gloucestershire County Council Support Services.

Make sure your child arrives at school on time for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

If your child is ill or absent for any other reason, contact the school on the first day of absence.

Follow the school's procedures for notifying absence, and always let the school know of any days that your child is unable to attend.

Updated November 2020

It all adds up!

Attending school everyday gives your child the best chance of success.	100%
Attending 4½ days a week = 4 weeks learning missed per year	90%
Attending 4 days a week = 8 weeks learning missed per year	80%
Attending 3½ days a week = 12 weeks learning missed per year	70%

80% attendance adds up to missing 2 full years of education over their school life!

Can they afford to keep missing out?

Every Minute Counts!

Being late for school reduces learning time.

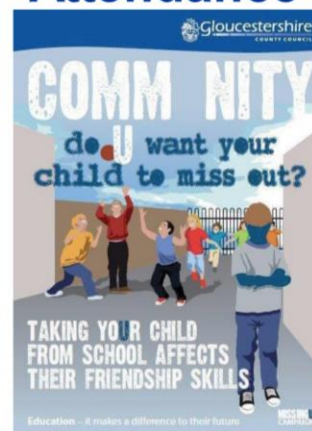
5 minutes late every day = 3 days of learning missed per year.

15 minutes late every day = 9 days of learning missed per year.

Arriving late can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher, and the other children in the class.



School Attendance



Information for Parents and Carers



Why is it important for children not to miss school?

Children only get one chance at school, and your child's chances of a successful future may be affected by not attending regularly. If children do not attend school regularly they may:

- Struggle to keep up with school work. In a busy school day it is difficult for schools to find the extra time to help a child catch up.
- Miss out on the social side of school life. Poor attendance can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships; a vital part of growing up. Employers want to recruit people who are reliable. Setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help your child later on in life.

What might the impact of poor attendance be on your child?

Research shows children who are not regularly attending school are:

- More likely to become involved in, or be a victim of crime and anti-social behavior.
- More likely to fall behind due to the strong link between attendance and achieving good results.
- Less likely to achieve 5 good GCSEs (grades 9-5) compared with those with less than 8 days absence.
- More likely to have increased levels of anxiety due to inconsistencies and uncertainty in their routine.
- More likely to have reduced self esteem due to finding learning increasingly hard having missed out on key information.



What does the law say?

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a suitable, full-time education. As a parent, you are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering your child at a school or by making other arrangements which provide a suitable full-time education.

Once your child is registered at a school you are responsible for making sure he or she attends regularly.

What happens if your child does not attend school regularly?

If your child fails to attend regularly - even if they miss school without you knowing - the Local Authority (LA) may take legal action against you.

Schools will notify you if your child's attendance level is a concern and look to work with you to put in place steps to improve it. If attendance continues to require improvement then schools will look to initiate an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM).

The AIM is the start of the legal process. It is important you engage with the process and work with the support provided to meet the agreed targets. These targets will be reviewed and progress evaluated at a review meeting. If satisfactory progress is made then targets will either be considered met or adjusted until attendance is satisfactory. If progress is not made then you may be referred to the LA for legal intervention.

You run the risk of being issued with a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted in court. If this happens:

- Parents can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means that the parent has to attend a counselling and guidance programme, usually a parenting class.

When is absence authorised?

There may be times when your child has to miss school because they are unwell. If your child becomes ill you should notify the school immediately and follow the school's absence procedures.

Children may have to attend a medical or dental appointment in school time. However, you should, whenever possible, try to make routine appointments such as dental check-ups during the school holidays or after school hours. Schools have the right to request medical evidence to validate absences for medical reasons.

If you think you might need to take your child out of school, discuss the reasons with the school as soon as possible. Absence must be requested as far in advance as possible. Absences will only be authorised by the school in exceptional circumstances.

Examples of absence that may be considered as exceptional circumstances include family bereavement or taking part in an agreed religious observance. The decision on whether to authorise absence is made at the headteacher's discretion.

For more information

For more information you can contact the Local Authority's Education Inclusion Service at:

Phone: 01452 427274

Email: Attendance@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Website: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning



