



Attendance Policy

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Introduction

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable learners to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all learners is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all learners on roll to attend every day when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 95%+ attendance for all our learners, and we use a variety of weekly and termly strategies and annual certificate prize awards to promote and celebrate good attendance and punctuality across the school. This is with the aim of creating a culture of learners wanting to attend, enjoy and thrive in our school environment, as many have failed in the past or experienced a negative educational journey prior to join the Coombswood school.

We encourage learners to attend, and we work collaboratively to put in place appropriate strategies to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each learner's:

- Progress and attainment in school.
- Relationships with other learners and their ability to form lasting friendships.
- Confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others.

The principal and senior leadership team, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

The Government expects:

Schools and local authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensure every learner has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents to:

- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their child registered at a school attends regularly.
- Ensure their child is punctual to their lessons.
- Inform schools if their child is, ill, anxious or suffering with mental health.
- Provide school with a GP note to support absence from school. School will provide work packs for this period or external well-being support and guidance.

The Education Act 1996 defines a parent as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child; and
- Any person who has care of a child, i.e., lives with and looks after a child.

Why Regular Attendance is important and The Law:

By law, all learners of compulsory school age must receive a full time-education. Section 444 1(a) of the Education Act 1966 says, "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his (her) parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted".

Learners are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year. Any exceptions to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the principal.

Any learner's absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the government as a persistent absentee. Medical evidence will be required to support attendance issues.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents should:

- Contact the school before 8.45am on the first day their child is absent.
- Provide a written explanation or medical evidence to explain any absence on the first day the learner returns to school.
- Arrange routine medical appointments outside of school hours wherever possible.
- Ensure any hospital appointments or appointments with other medical support services i.e. (CAMHS) are outside of school hours but where this is not possible, to ensure that your child is only absent for the minimum amount of time necessary for any such appointment.
- Co-operate with school staff and respond to any correspondence.
- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time.
- Keep school up to date with changes of address and emergency contact details.

School Staff should:

- Complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. This is a legal requirement.
- Contact any parents at 9.15 a.m. if no communication has been received, and a child is absent.
- Maintain regular, efficient, and accurate recordings of both admission and attendance registers.
- Monitor learner's attendance and punctuality weekly to highlight and act when there is cause for concern.
- Ensure effective safeguarding action is taken for regular non-school attendance and erratic absence patterns.

Attendance Officers and Attendance Team should:

- Contact parents on the first day of absence if no reason has been provided by 9.15 a.m. and try to ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Contact parents from 9.25 a.m. to pursue non-attendance at school.
- Write to parents/carers requesting confirmation for the reason of the absence. Parents should respond within 5 working days.
- Ensure attendance and lateness records are up to date and that there is a mark recorded for each session that the school is open.
- Ensure that only national attendance codes are entered within the attendance register.
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.
- Refer to the local authority when the referral criteria are met.

Learners should:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive to school and lessons on time.
- Be prepared for the school day.

Safeguarding In Education

All staff at Coombswood School are aware that "safeguarding is everyone's business". We all play a crucial role in protecting learners and young people and keeping them safe or helping them to feel safe. Ofsted under Section 5, make judgements in relation to the effectiveness of safeguarding. Coombswood School recognises its legal duty under Section 157 and 175 of The Education Act 2002, to work together with other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learner. Our school has a clear "Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy" which considers the "working together to safeguard children" 2018 document. This is reviewed annually and ensures all staff undertake appropriate training regarding safeguarding.

[Safeguarding – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#)

Illness and Medical Appointments

If a child has a serious medical complaint, the parent/carer should have correspondence from a consultant, or other medical professionals as to the diagnosis or future appointments relating to that condition. Parents should produce such information to allow school to make an informed decision.

For minor ailments school will plan based against what they already know about that learner (e.g., pattern of attendance, or an illness running through the school or a national epidemic).

If your child is absent due to vomiting, they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other learners and adults at school. The school will support with work packs and support were required.

For more than three days of absence the school require a written explanation of why the child was absent. The school office will request this if it is not produced.

Medical certificates are required for absence greater than five days.

Action for Low Attendance

- 96%+ excellent – well done! This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
- 94-95% average – strive to build on this. Work with parents to continue to promote full attendance to move to 96%+
- 85-93% poor – absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. School will contact parent directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance.
- Below 85% unacceptable – absence is causing serious concern. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. If improvement is not achieved a referral is made to the local authority.
- Penalty Notice considered where absence is not authorised in liaison with the local authority.
- Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different, and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance. Prior to the engagement of the local authority, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a learners' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for local authority involvement.

Learner Missing Education

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the principal must be informed in writing. Learners cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted and supported by the local authority and if a child has an EHCP a transfer review has been carried out. Where it is deemed a child is missing from education, has been continuously absent for 10 days, and the absence is unauthorised, school will liaise with the local authority.

Deletions from the Admission Register

A learner can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Lateness

The school register is taken between 9.00 a.m. – 9.15 a.m. and at the start of the afternoon session between 12.15 p.m. – 12.30 p.m. Learners arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The learner will be marked as late before registration has closed.

(Code 'L'). The register will close at 9.30 a.m. for the morning and at 1.00 p.m. for the afternoon. Learners arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U'). This code statically counts as unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the learner concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents at annual reviews, attendance meetings, PEPs and day to day phone calls and may be referred to the local authority.

Statutory Intervention for Lateness

If there are 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed in a term the school will liaise with the SEND Team and transport team with regards to next steps.

Definitions

Every half-day absence must be identified by the school whether the absence is approved or not. This is why information about the cause of each absence is required.

Authorised Absence

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for a learner to be absent or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given.

This includes:

- Parents keeping a learner off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.
- Holidays not authorised.
- Authorising absence.

Only the principal can authorise absence. The absence must be unavoidable. The principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified. Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g., poorly/unwell.
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill.
- Parental illness (alternative arrangements should be made to ensure the learner can be taken to school – emergencies excepted).
- Oversleeping.
- Inadequate clothing/uniform.
- Confusion over school dates.
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason or pre-authorisation.
- Child's/family birthday.
- Shopping trip.
- Attendance and lateness.

If a new learner has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a prestart attendance meeting held and targets will be set. For all learners, the school monitors absence and lateness and has a stepped approach to acting. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed. Responsible staff will use discretion and consider each case carefully.

- Discussion with the local authority to identify learners with attendance below 85%, monitoring trends in learner attendance and lateness, support where necessary.
- Request from school for parent/carer to meet with school staff.
- Initiate the process, if appropriate, to access support from other agencies.
- Referral to the local authority.

Reasons for absence are recorded and retained by the school. Working in close liaison with the SEND Team, senior managers and other professionals, a decision will be made if the absence warrants a referral to the Education Investigation Service. If a referral is made the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **MUST** be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

Once a referral is received from school due to unauthorised absence, the local authority will carry out their statutory duties which may result in the following:

- A Warning Notice being issued for unauthorised absence.
- A Fixed Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence or if a learner is seen in a public place during school hours whilst excluded.
- Legal proceedings being undertaken for non-school attendance.
- Apply for an Education Supervision Order.

Holiday in Term Time/Leave of Absence

Taking holidays in term time will affect a learner's schooling and is unauthorised. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the government made an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 in September 2013 to reflect this. Leave of absence shall not be granted unless:

- (a) an application has been made in advance to the principal by a parent with whom the learner normally resides and
- (b) the principal, or a person authorised by the principal in accordance with paragraph (1), considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the exceptional circumstances relating to that application.

All applications must be made in writing to the principal at least 5 school days prior to the requested leave date.

Failure to notify and/or request leave of absence in term time, providing at least 5 days' notice will result in all absence being unauthorised.

The principal will only grant leave where parents can prove exceptional circumstances e.g., SEN holiday, extenuating circumstances where a close relative is ill abroad etc, (irrespective of the child's overall attendance). If it is agreed such leave is an exceptional circumstance, parents will be informed in writing. On any occasion that school refuses a request for leave in term time, should parent/carers proceed with the leave it will be recorded as a (G) (family holiday not agreed), on the school's register.

Penalty Notices

Dudley local authority's code of conduct states that penalty notices can be issued where a learner's absence has not been authorised by the school. This includes: several unauthorised absences, within a rolling academic year; one-off instances of irregular attendance; and where an excluded learner is found in a public place during school hours.

Penalty Notices are imposed upon each parent per child and are fines of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made and under s444(1) Education Act 1996 when there is sufficient evidence. There is no right of appeal by parents against the Penalty Notices. They are an early intervention tool to address attendance issues in the first instance.

Rewards for Positive Attendance

The benefits derived from regular attendance are that continuity and progression in learning are ensured, engagement will improve and both areas will support the development of learner's confidence and positive relationship with school. Learners are rewarded on a daily basis through positive engagement points and the opportunity to access social academic rewards and vocational experience opportunities. Certificates are awarded at the end of each term for 95% attendance and above and celebrated in the whole school assembly or in class awards ceremonies.

School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures 2016

Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders & Penalty Notices, (FPN's), are interventions available to promote better school attendance & behaviour.

All parents are responsible for ensuring that their learner of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision or otherwise, (e.g., a parent can choose to educate their child at home).

The definitions of a parent are:

- All natural Parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has Parental Responsibility for a child; and
- Any person who has care of a child, i.e., lives with and looks after a child.

Parenting Contracts

A Parenting Contract is a formal, written, signed agreement between Parents and either the Local Authority, (LA), or the Governing Body of a School and should contain:

- A statement by the Parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the Contract; and
- A statement by the Local Authority or Governing Body agreeing to provide support to the Parents for the purpose of complying with the Contract.

Parenting contracts can be used in cases of misbehaviour or irregular attendance at a school or alternative provision. Parenting contracts are voluntary, but any non-compliance should be recorded by the school or local authority as it may be used as evidence in court where an application is made for a Behaviour Parenting Order.

Parenting Orders

Parenting Orders are imposed by the court and the parent's agreement is not required before an Order is made. Parenting orders are available as an "Ancillary Order" following a successful prosecution by a local authority for irregular attendance.

Parenting orders consist of two elements:

- A requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's behaviour. This is the core of the Parenting Order and lasts for up to three months; and,
- A requirement for parents to comply with such requirements as is specified in the Order. This element can last up to twelve months.

All Parenting Orders must be supervised by a responsible Officer from the School, (Behaviour Orders only), or the local authority. They are individually named in the Parenting Order.

Any breach by Parents without a reasonable excuse could lead to a fine of up to £1,000. The Police may enforce any breach of an Order by a parent. Parents have a right to appeal a Parenting Order to the Crown Court.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are imposed upon parents and are fines of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal by parents against the Penalty Notices. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents. Dudley local authority's code of conduct states that Penalty Notices can be issued where a learner's absence has not been authorised by the school. This includes: several unauthorised absences, within a rolling academic year or where an excluded learner is found in a public place during school hours.

Leave of absence shall not be granted unless: (a) an application is made in advance to the school, and (b) the principal considers the request to have exceptional circumstances relating to that application. If leave of absence is taken after the principal has considered it and deemed it NOT to be for exceptional circumstances, or you do not make an application in advance, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be referred to the Education Investigation Service.

Penalty notices may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents will be notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Safeguarding Learner Missing Education Process

Day One: the school identifies that a child is not in school. A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent/carer that the child is safe at home.

Outcome of Call	Action
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers.	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours. Continue process each day. Send absence letter every day. Call Social Worker or Youth Offending Team.
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them.	Ask for reason for absence and record.
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe,	The school's designated lead for safeguarding and child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child.
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned.	School to advise the parent to: Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing. Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit. Inform them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child. Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school in case, he/she has sustained an injury and has been admitted for medical treatment. Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing.

If the judgment on day one is that there is reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm the school will contact the police and/or learner's social worker immediately. If the judgment on day one is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm school continues to make enquiries and informs Education Inclusion and Partnership on Day ten that the child is missing education.

School Risk Assessment for Child Missing Education

Assessing vulnerability requires a combination of professional knowledge and experience of child welfare issues and knowledge of local circumstances. Considering the following questions could assist the process. If in doubt always consult with managers or other services.

Criteria	Risk	Action
Is there good reason to believe that the child may be the victim of crime?		Inform Police and/or children's social care immediately
Does the child have a formal child protection plan?		
Is the child in care i.e. looked after by the local authority?		
Is the planned or current LA children's social care or LA adults' social care services involved? e.g. section 47 enquiry about to start		
Is there a person present in or visiting the family who poses an on-going risk to children, or who is suspected of previously harming a child?		
Is the child at risk of sexual exploitation?		
Is the child at risk of radicalisation?		
Has there been LA children's social care or LA adults' social care or Criminal Justice System involvement in the past?		Give consideration to the vulnerability of the child and following risk assessment inform one or all of the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Police <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Social Care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Authority Designated Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Education Welfare Service <input type="checkbox"/> School Nurse Use other services to help with your risk assessment, including the above.
Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. FGM or forced marriage.		
Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?		
Is there any known history of domestic violence?		
Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?		
Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child been a victim of bullying?		
Does the child need essential medical or health care?		
Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child gone missing with their family?		
Have the parents been subject to proceedings in relation to attendance?		
Is there a history of poor attendance?		
Has there been any change in the child/family's financial circumstances?		
Age of the child		