



# The Cowplain School

**Work hard. Enjoy learning. Achieve highly.**

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Adopted: Autumn 2021

Review date: Autumn 2022

### **Section 1**

#### **1.1 Aims of the Policy**

This policy aims to:

- improve the overall attendance at school by consistently striving to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all students
- make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and governors
- develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students
- develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
- develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- implement a system of rewards and sanctions for attendance
- promote effective partnerships with other services and agencies.

#### **1.2 Rationale**

Good attendance is essential to ensure that students benefit from the maximum number of learning opportunities. Students who attend regularly get more from their education, take part in a wider range of activities, achieve better examination results relative to their ability and find better employment than those who do not attend regularly. Therefore, it is the joint responsibility of those who work in the school and the parents to make sure that each child attends as often as possible. In addition, we must work to ensure that students arrive in school and at lessons on time and that all timetabled activities begin on time.

It is the school's duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The Governors and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of The Cowplain School are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance at school and will support school staff, parents and students in doing so.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Schools should:

1. Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
2. Ensure every child has access to full-time education
3. Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly. All students must be punctual to their lessons.

## **Section 2**

### **2.1 Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

To encourage high attendance levels the school will:

- ensure efficient and consistent practice in addressing attendance issues by having clear roles and responsibilities
- reward good attendance
- very closely monitor the attendance of all students and specific groups of students, ie Pupil Premium
- keep accurate records of attendance
- notify parents where we have concerns about absences as soon as possible
- work with appropriate agencies to minimise extended absence
- review any requests for absence, taking into account any exceptional circumstances, in line with the leave of absence process detailed on the school website under: The School Day/Attendance
- ensure all staff play an active role in the promotion of attendance
- promote attendance through a planned programme of tutor, Pastoral Team, Attendance Team and SLT input, eg allocated time in tutor period, assemblies and student interviews
- emphasise to students the link between high levels of attendance with academic success and employability
- sanction poor attendance using penalty notices or other legal interventions should this prove necessary.

### **2.2 Roles and responsibilities**

#### **2.2.1 Responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team**

- Set attendance targets as part of the school Action Plan and target setting process and monitor progress towards achieving them
- Ensure that strategies are in place to promote and implement the policy throughout the academy
- Determine in collaboration with the Attendance Manager whether to authorise any proposed absences requested or any absences that have already taken place which were not requested
- Notify parents as appropriate that failure to attend regularly by a student of compulsory age could lead to legal prosecution of the parents

- Through appropriate staff initiate strategies to improve attendance
- Make a termly report to Governors.

### **2.2.2 Responsibilities of the Attendance Manager**

- Oversee the attendance arrangements and ensure they are working efficiently
- Ensure regular checks of the registers are made to monitor student absence
- Ensure regular checks of absence notes and ensure unaccounted absences are followed up
- Arrange appropriate training for staff and deal with issues of inadequate registering
- Advise SLT on further improvements and progress towards set targets
- Produce summary data on attendance as requested by SLT
- Manage legal interventions including the use of penalty notices
- Contact home where patterns of poor attendance are causing concern
- Liaise with the Head of Year to plan assemblies on attendance and materials for the tutor programme.

### **2.2.3 Responsibilities of the Head of Year**

- Liaise with Attendance Team on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Lead tutor team in addressing any students with attendance below 97%
- Support Attendance Manager with assemblies and the tutor programme
- Contact home where patterns of poor attendance are causing concern
- Promote good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.

### **2.2.4 Responsibilities of tutors**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately and punctually
- Support assemblies and deliver attendance aspects of the tutor programme
- Keep the Head of Year and Attendance Team advised of suspected truancy
- Advise the Head of Year and Attendance Team of any underlying problems that may account for absence
- Promote good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.

### **2.2.5 Responsibilities of classroom staff**

- Take a register of attendance of students to lessons within the first five minutes
- Take action if internal truancy is suspected, ie contact the Head of Year/Attendance Team
- Inform the Head of Year/Attendance Team of persistent absences
- Alert immediately if a student who is on the Alert List is not present in the lesson
- Promote good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.

### **2.2.6 Responsibilities of students**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

### **2.2.7 Responsibilities of parents and carers**

Ensuring their child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law. Therefore parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the Attendance Team any planned absences well in advance
- make a request for leave of absence following Hampshire County Council guidelines
- support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a telephone is unavailable
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for exceptional circumstance.

### **Section 3**

#### **3.1 Recording attendance**

Registration will take place at the beginning of tutor time and at the beginning of each lesson. This will be done electronically, using SIMS. Where it is not possible for this to take place, for example where a supply teacher is in charge, a hard copy of the register will be issued which must be sent to the Reception Office without delay. Legally the register must be marked twice daily; this occurs at 8.30am and at 12.10pm.

#### **3.2 Lateness/punctuality**

A student arriving after 9.00am without valid reason will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the morning session which will have a direct impact on their attendance.

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning session and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher, miss vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others and cause embarrassment leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8.30am and all students are expected to be in school at this time. Morning registration is at 8.30am, it closes at 9.00am
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows the student to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence
- If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see Section 6 for further detail).

Students working in the Resilience Centre begin the day at 8.00am and registration closes at 8.30am. These students are subject to the same expectations in terms of punctuality as students in the rest of the school. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents, guardians or carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness

persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. Should lateness be an ongoing issue the school reserves the right to code as an unauthorised absence which will further reduce individual attendance.

### **3.3 If a child is absent**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

#### **3.3.1 First day absence**

If their child is absent parents, guardians or carers must:

- contact the school as soon as possible on the first day with an explanation of the absence, or
- visit the school and report to Reception.

If a child is absent the school will:

- telephone or text the parent, guardian or carer on the first day of absence if no contact has been made – the school has a duty to ensure the child's safety as well as their regular school attendance
- invite parents, guardians or carers in to school to discuss the situation with the Attendance Manager and/or the Head of Year and Deputy Headteacher if absences persist
- refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and reaches threshold.

#### **3.3.2 Third day absence**

If the child is still away on the third day and there has been no contact from parents or carers the school will:

- start *child missing in education (CME) procedures* as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance
- make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

A Pastoral Leader or the Attendance Manager may visit the family home to try to establish contact.

#### **3.3.3 Ten day absence**

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carers then the local authority is notified through a CME tracking form that the child is at risk of missing education. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents must make sure the school always has an up-to-date contact number. The school will make regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **3.3.4 Continued or ongoing absence**

If a child misses 10% (19 days/38 sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, the school monitors all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% the school will contact parents, guardians or carers and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will:

- ask parents, guardians or carers to sign a contract to support good attendance
- decide with the parent/carer whether a referral for external support would be helpful.

### **3.4 Child leaves site without permission**

In the event of a student leaving the school site without permission parents will be contacted immediately. Should the school be unable to contact an adult with parental responsibility the police will be contacted to inform of a missing child.

The school will ensure that if the police have been contacted follow up calls to parents will be made to confirm the child is safe.

## **Section 4**

### **4.1 Request for leave of absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term-time to go on holiday and, in the majority of cases, holidays will not be authorised.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form, available on the school website or Reception, in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school the absence will be unauthorised and, if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term-time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and the school expects parental support by not taking children out during school time.

## **Section 5**

### **5.1 Understanding types of absence**

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **Unauthorised absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
  - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
  - truancy before or during the school day
  - absences which have not been explained.

The school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday. The school reserves the right to decide on an appropriate attendance code to use for the records.

## **Section 6**

### **6.1 Penalty Notices and other legal measures**

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance.

The following legal measures will be used for students of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting Orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution.

### **6.2 Using Penalty Notices**

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's Code of Conduct, issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document which ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

The Code of Conduct states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the student has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive

- persistently late before the close of register (coded L), but the school has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness, and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met

... unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed. Penalty Notices will only be issued, following recommendation from the Headteacher.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a Penalty Notice is issued for:

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period

This includes where a student has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences, additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any further unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information please visit Hampshire County Council's website at: [www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties](http://www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties).

## **Section 7**

### **7.1 A child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should the parent/carer do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them



from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents, guardians or carers should contact the Attendance Team or Head of Year immediately to openly discuss the issue (see Appendix 1 and the school website for contact details). The child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that the school identifies the reason for the child's reluctance to attend school and works with the parent/carer and child to tackle the problem. In some cases parents/carers may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of the child's difficulties with another professional.

## **7.2 What can parents/carers do to encourage their child to attend school?**

- Make sure the child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning
- Ensure the child leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped
- Show interest in, and the value of, the child's education
- Look at the child's The Cowplain School diary and use it to communicate with the tutor or teachers
- Show interest in what the child is doing in school, the things they have learnt, their friends and even what they had for lunch!

## **7.3 Leavers**

If the child is leaving the school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 11, on the last Friday of June each year) parents are asked to give the Inclusions Manager comprehensive information about their plans, including the date of any move, new address and telephone numbers, the child's new school and the start date when known.

If students leave and the school does not have the above information, the child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the police and other agencies. By providing the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

## **7.4 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling**

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. Parents must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

## **7.5 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for a child to leave school early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

## 7.6 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. Students must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12-month period to be able to request leave for work purposes.

To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised, coded T. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

## 7.7 Advice to parents

Parents will be informed of changes to the school's regulations and the law regarding attendance, punctuality and absence including absence for family holidays and for authorised activities through the school's website.

## Section 8

### 8.1 Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. The school will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

### Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Policy is reviewed every year by the Senior Leadership Team and Governors as part of the self evaluation cycle. Appropriate action is taken if changes are required.

### Other Relevant Policies

This Policy should be used with reference to one or more of the following policies:

Admissions Policy  
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy  
Anti-Bullying Policy  
Exclusion Policy  
Home School Agreement  
Behaviour Policy

A copy of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy is available at [www.cowplainschool.co.uk](http://www.cowplainschool.co.uk)

Date Reviewed:	Autumn 2021	Reviewed by:	NBT	Next Review:	Autumn 2022
Summary of changes made:	The policy has been updated: Pastoral Team changed to Head of Year  3.4 Child leaves site without permission added				