

The Forest Federation of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools

Attendance Policy

Date: Sept 2024

Article 28- Children have the right to an education

Contents:

1. Aims and Objectives
2. Legislation and Guidance
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. School processes for recording attendance and absence
5. Procedures following unexplained absence
6. Strategies for promoting attendance
7. Attendance data monitoring, reporting and analyzing
8. Reducing persistent and severe absence
9. Legal sanctions
10. Links to other policies and monitoring arrangements
11. Template letter and guidance for parents

1. Aims and objectives

At the Forest Federation, 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.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education elsewhere. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence, in advance, from the school.

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.

When reporting pupil absence, contact details are:

Soudley Primary: Mrs Chamberlin 01594 822004; admin@soudley.gloucs.sch.uk

Steam Mills Primary-Miss Agg 01594 842287; admin@steammills.gloucs.sch.uk

Woodside Primary –Mrs Matthews 01594542287; gmatthews@woodside.gloucs.sch.uk

or Mrs Phelps admin@woodside.gloucs.sch.uk

2. 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.

3. 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 8:45 am 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

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

The governing body 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 headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement across the schools

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the schools
- 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 (Attendance Champion) 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 key messages to pupils and parents
- Signposting 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.

The school attendance officers are 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 pastoral lead/family support worker/SENCo to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting the information to the school office as soon as possible after the register is completed.
- Communicating concerns over attendance to the office staff and designated senior leader

School administration/office staff 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
- Contacting parent/guardian by 9:15am to check child's whereabouts, if there has been no communication about absence.

4. 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 (authorised or unauthorised and coded according to DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance')
- Late

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will 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 8:40 am at Soudley Primary and by 8:45am at Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools.

The register for the morning session will be taken promptly and be kept open until 9:10am at Soudley and until 9:15am at Steam Mills and Woodside. The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:30pm.

Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for an unplanned absence on the first day by 8:45 am by calling the school.

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.

Ongoing punctuality issues may result in a request to issue a Penalty notice.

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.
- 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.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as absence due to an unavoidable reason. Term time holidays are not authorised.

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 two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the school's leave of absence request form accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may 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
- Attendance at counselling/therapy sessions

5. Procedures following unexplained absence

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school will follow the child missing in education protocols (contact police etc)
- 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
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance summaries from SIMS are sent home three times a year with reports.

Weekly celebration of attendance in assemblies, eg using class trophy.

Reminders about the importance of good punctuality and attendance on the weekly newsletters.

7. Attendance data monitoring, reporting and analysing

The school will:

- Regularly inform parents of their child's attendance levels (three times a year with reports)
- Monitor attendance and absence data across the schools and at an individual level where there are specific concerns/intervention (*daily for any children with safeguarding concerns; weekly for classes; termly and annual analysis with comparisons to national data.*)
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern (ie closer monitoring of SEND and pupil premium children as national data trends show that attendance for these groups tends to be below non-SEND and non-pupil premium children.)

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 *class teachers*, and other school leaders (eg pupil premium leads/*FSWs/SENCo*), to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

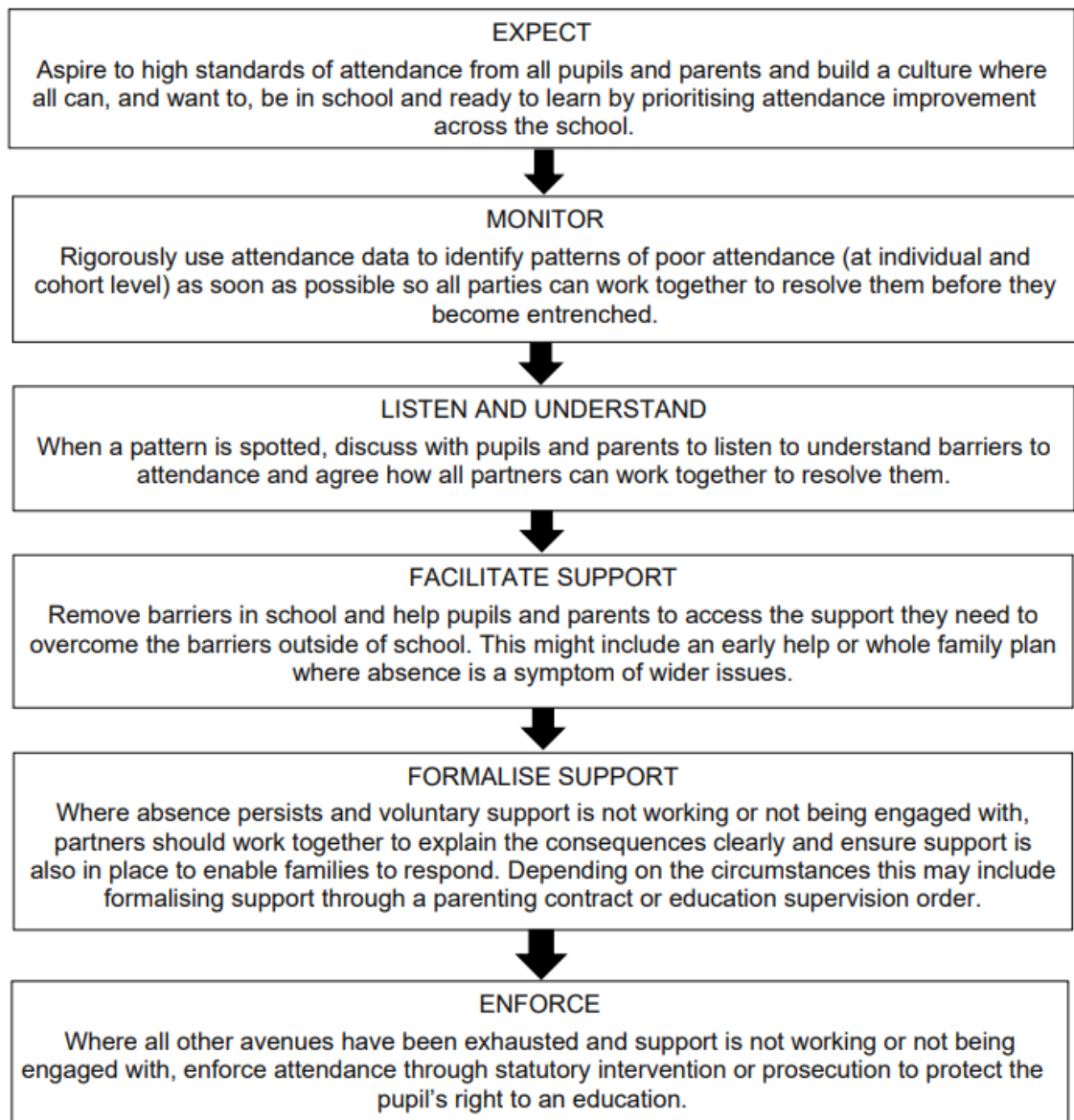
8. Reducing persistent and severe absence

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 eg Young Minds Matter, school nurse service
- In line with DfE's 'Working Together to Improve Attendance', our approach is:



- 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

9. 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 [Attendance - Schoolsnet \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/attendance-schoolsnet) *NB if schools use this link they will not have to update the document when it is changed on GCC's website*

The penalty amount is increasing to £160 from September 2024 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21days).

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

10. Links to other policies and monitoring arrangements

See the school websites for other policies related to attendance eg Child Protection and Safeguarding/Behaviour

[Soudley School, Forest of Dean](#)

[Steam Mills Primary School - Home](#)

[Welcome to Woodside Primary School | Ruardean Woodside School](#)

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually, by the Executive Headteacher. The Governing Body will be asked to approve the policy each time it is reviewed/updated.

Appendix 1: Template letter- Attendance concern

Forest Federation
of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools



Child's Name

Class

Dear Parents

Date:

On reviewing attendance across the schools, I am writing to summarise’s attendance for you. Staff are concerned that poor attendance is impacting your child’s education and are keen to support better attendance in the new academic year.

Current attendance% (Sept ____ to now)

Our intention is to support all children to attend well, so that they can benefit fully from their primary education experience, in line with our overall school aims.

Please could you contact us to discuss this; it may be that our staff can support your child further.

Staff will continue to monitor attendance and hope to see an improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M Davis

Executive Head Teacher

Appendix 2: Template letter-Response to GCC form re.request for term time absence:

Forest Federation
of Soudley, Steam Mills and Woodside Primary Schools



Child's Name

Class

Dear

Date

Your request for absence on the following dates:to(totalling
..... days has been considered and is **AUTHORISED/ UNAUTHORISED**

a) - Their attendance is currently

b) - The request does not meet the criteria for 'exceptional circumstance'

Please note: An unauthorised absence may be notified to the Local Authority and a Penalty Notice may be issued without further warning

Signed Head teacher/Attendance Officer

Date

Appendix 3 Attendance Information Letter July 2024

Dear Parents and Carers
2024

July

Please see information below, from GCC, due to new DfE statutory attendance guidance - 'Attendance Counts' which is applicable from Sept 2024

There has been growing national concern regarding declining school attendance rates across the UK. In response, the Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance, effective from August 2024, aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

'Support First'

As the DfE notes, *'Improving attendance is everyone's business'*, and it is important that we, as your child's school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that *'the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.'*

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact your class teacher as soon as possible so that barriers to attendance can be understood, and appropriate support can be put in place to support you, your family, and your child to prevent further absences.

Formalising and intensifying the support

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by the local authority (LA). Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place),
- arriving late after the register has closed,
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time

These 10 weeks can span different terms, academic years, and even different educational settings, such as transitions to secondary school or in-year school changes. For instance, if your child misses 3 days of school for a holiday in July (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, you may be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the LA to each parent/carers responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

The penalty amount is increasing to £160 from September 2024 (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21 days).

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

We recognise that these Penalty Notices may be unpopular with families, but it is important to inform you of these changes promptly.

Nationally, Headteachers are:

- not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and
- are to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.

The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.

The new policy also states that all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria is met. This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.

Our revised school attendance policy in line with these requirements can be found on the school's website.

If you would also like more information, please visit the LA's public attendance pages after the 19th August: [Attendance and absence from school | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress. Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.