



# **Cotham School**

## **Attendance Policy and Procedures**

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## **Part 1 Policy:**

### **1. Introduction**

It is the aim of Cotham School that students should enjoy learning, experience success and realise their full potential. Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of students

Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a student as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

### **2. Aims**

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by promoting good attendance; ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled; and acting early to address patterns of absence.

This Policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents<sup>1</sup> must follow to report their child absent from school. If a child is unable to attend school for any reason, the parent should inform the school of the reason on the first day of absence on the Attendance Line 0117 919 8019. If the school is concerned about a student's attendance for any reason we will contact the parent to discuss the matter, in the first instance

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We want our students to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to maintain friendships, keep up with learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our students to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality is essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school', therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the student's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We will do all we can to encourage our students to attend, We will also make the best provision we can for any student who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition.

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<sup>1</sup> Education law defines parents as: all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who has parental responsibility for the child or young person; and any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child. In this policy the term 'parent' includes parents and carers.

Please see DfE guidance documents [‘Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions - December 2015’](#) and [‘Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs- January 2013’](#)

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all students, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community
- Raise our students awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support , advice and guidelines to parents, staff and students
- Work in partnership with parents
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality

### **Effects of non-attendance**

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

<b>Attendance during school year</b>	<b>Days lost in a year</b>	<b>Which is approximately</b>	<b>Approximate number of lessons missed</b>
95%	9.5 Days	2 week	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 weeks	100 Lessons

### **3. Safeguarding and Attendance**

We will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all students as part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a student’s attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) 2018 version or as updated by the DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and /or the Police of the details of any student who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the students welfare.

## 4. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 2018 [school attendance guidance](#), from the DfE, and refers to the DfE's 2015 statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996 (as amended)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended in 2012 and 2013)

The DfE's guidance on the [school census](#) explains the persistent absence threshold. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

### **Part 2 What the Law says and Our School Procedure:**

#### **1 Contents of the Attendance Register**

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record if the student is:

Present

Absent

Attending an approved educational activity; or,

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

#### **2 Present at School (and Lateness)**

Students are marked present if they are in the room when the register is taken. If a student leaves the school premises after registration they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of the parent to ensure that children attend school on time.

Students must arrive at 8.25am on each school day.

Our morning register is taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 9.30am

Our afternoon registration at 2.05pm

A student who arrives late but before the register is closed will be marked as late (L) – which counts as present. A student who arrives late **after** the registers close will be marked as absent. If the student is late arriving due to a valid reason such as a medical appointment the absence will be authorised. In line with Local Authority guidelines the reasons for lates of traffic or travel delays cannot be accepted for persistent absence if the parent has chosen to

travel to Cotham School rather than a local school . If the student is late for no good reason they will be marked as unauthorised (U). See DfE Attendance codes – Appendix 1

### **Effects of Late Arrival at School**

When a student arrives late to school, they miss important events like tutor time, teacher instructions and introductions. The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 days	15 lessons
10 mins	6 days	30 lessons
15 mins	9 days	45 lessons

### **3 Authorised Absence**

‘Authorised Absence’ means that the school has either given approval in advance for the student to be away from the school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification of absence.

#### **The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:**

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school’s absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

The school follows the 2018 DfE School Attendance Guidance which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence (See link in the Legislation and Guidance section, or at the end of this policy)

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from the GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the students GP directly.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a student has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case the school will make the parent aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

Absences should be reported on the Attendance Line 0117 9198019 or on the MyEd App. There is a 24 hours voicemail on this number. Parents should leave, the child's name, tutor group, reason for absence and expected date of return

If the child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact the school's designated Safeguarding Lead for further information on the support available. Parents should also contact their GP or the NHS Helpline by phoning telephone number 111 for advice if they are concerned. In case of emergency parents should dial 999

### **Students taken ill during the day**

If a student needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances the student must be collected from Student Reception by a parent or other authorised adult and sign out. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

### **3.2 Medical / Dental Appointments**

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a student must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from student reception by the parent or another authorised adult and sign out. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation. Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it is an emergency and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or copy of the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

### **3.3 Religious Observation**

Our school acknowledges the multi faith nature of our community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of the school holiday or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observation by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

### **3.4 Traveller Absence**

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller Student of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded in the register.

### **3.5 Exclusions**

If the school decides to send a student home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current [DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions](#)

The school will notify the parent of an exclusion. If the student is a Child in Care, the school will notify the student's carer, social worker and the Hope Virtual School. In other instances, where a student is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

The student must be collected from the school office by the parents or another authorised adult and sign out at Student Reception. No student will be allowed to leave the site without parental confirmation.

### **4 First Day of Absence Response**

The school will attempt to contact by text the parent of any child who is absent from morning registration without a reason having been supplied to the School. Parents must ensure that the school has contact details of at least three people who can be contacted in an emergency, it is also the parents responsibility to keep these numbers updated.

If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers and are concerned for the child, we may request a Welfare Check from the police.

### **5 Rewarding Good and Improved Attendance**

We reward students for good or improved attendance by group and individually.

### **6 Leave of Absence Requests – Exceptional Circumstances**

**The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request, whilst considering a consistent approach across the school. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child lives and this must be done in advance of the absence. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the student can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the schools discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Written evidence of exceptional circumstances will be required, if flights are booked in an emergency the school will need confirmation of the date the flights were booked.

Parents should complete a leave of absence form which is available on the school website or from the Attendance Office. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated: and wherever possible at least **four weeks** before the absence. . If the request is not made to the school before the absence is taken, the school will not authorise an absence retrospectively Although such absence may be unauthorised it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing.

If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks such as risk of FGM or Forced Marriage we will follow the necessary protocols in line with our Safeguarding policies.

## **7. Unauthorised Absence**

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

Absence will be unauthorised if a student is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absence, it is the schools decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Students who arrive at school after the register closes
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Waiting at home for deliveries / repairs
- Day Trips
- Long Weekends and Holiday in term time
- If a student is kept away from school longer than was agreed

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions usually Penalty Notices or Prosecution.

## **8 Approved Educational Activity ( AEA)**

When students are attending educational activities off the school site that have been approved by the school, the register will be marked to show this is the case.

If a student is attending an alternative education providers such as another school or a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), for part or all of their education, our school will make arrangements for the student to be dual registered and mark our registers accordingly.

If a student is attending an alternative education provider, which is not a school or PRU , for part or all of their education, we will mark the sessions which the student attends the alternative setting as code B ( off site educational activity ). The school expects the alternative provider (AP) to notify us of any absences by individual students, to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as necessary.

### **9. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in the law and DfE guidance)**

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record students as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' in the following circumstances (these are not recorded as absences)

- Our school site , or part of it is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- A national or local emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the child from attending school and the students home is not within statutory walking distance ( see ['Home to school travel and transport'](#)
- The student is in custody , but still on the school roll

### **10. Support for Poor School Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave )**

Sometimes students can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and students to be honest and open with us about the reasons for a student's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school we need to understand the reasons why a student is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support students in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a student, we will do our best to make the parents aware of these concerns and given them an opportunity to address this. However, if parents do not make use of the support offered and improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions.

If a student's attendance falls below 90% a referral may be made to Education Welfare Services South West. All parents will be warned that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction by letter.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a child who is absent we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

## **11. Students on Part-time timetables**

Students are entitled to a full time education, suitable for their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have.

If for any reason our school is unable to provide a student with a full time education due to the student's needs, we will work with the student, parents and other agencies to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any part time timetable will be for the shortest time possible, and only whilst arrangements are made to support the students return to a full time timetable (Alternative Provision).

## **12 Penalty Notices and Prosecutions**

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school . This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parents(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a Penalty Notice to their Local Authority for legal action, unless there are reasonable grounds for not doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a student's irregular attendance.

A student's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

- A Penalty Notice. The Penalty is £60 payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.)
- Prosecution

Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or 3 months imprisonment (see [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) and Bristol City Council's Penalty Code of Conduct, available here <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/education-welfare>

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

### **13. Children Missing Education (CME)**

Our school will add and delate students from roll in line with the law. The school follow [Bristol City Council's Children Missing Education guidance](#) and make CME and Pupil Tracking referrals as appropriate. The school will seek advice from the Children Missing Education Officer if unsure about individual cases [childrenmissingeducation@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:childrenmissingeducation@bristol.gov.uk)

### **14. Following up Unexplained Absences**

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by text on the first day of absence. If the child returns to school and still no explanation has been given a letter is sent to the home address. If we establish a reason for absence it will be marked accordingly. If there is no response to the letter the absence will remain unauthorised.

### **15. Attendance Reporting to Parents**

Attendance will be included on your child's reports. Where a child's attendance falls below 94% a letter is sent to advise the parents of our concerns .

### **16. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence**

All reasons given my parents are recorded on SIMS.

### **17.Attendance and School Visits**

In order that a student is eligible to attend an offsite extra-curricular visit or trip there is an expectation that a student's attendance will be 95% or above to be considered for a place.

Students will not be invited to participate in a trip if their attendance is less than 95% unless the trip must be attended in line with compulsory curriculum examination and coursework requirements. Having already missed significant amounts of classroom teaching through absence (authorised or unauthorised) it is important that they do not miss more.

Students with ongoing health issues whose attendance is below 95% will be able to access extra-curricular offsite trips and visits subject to the receipt of supporting medical evidence

T Reed

Attendance Officer

September 2019