



Cotmanhay Infant and Nursery School

Attendance and Absence Policy

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Statement of intent

Cotmanhay Infant and Nursery School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents/carers.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and punctuality, and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the wellbeing and safeguarding of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents/carers follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents/carers and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The school's Attendance and Welfare Officer is **Mrs Cat Lane**, and can be contacted via clane@cotmanhay-inf.derbyshire.sch.uk OR via Dojo message. Staff, parents/carers and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

Please note; children's absences should ALWAYS be made via the school office on 01159 302064 or via the Office Dojo.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013
- Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2023) 'Working together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'
- Equality Act 2010

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Children Missing Education Policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Supporting and monitoring through a link governor.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.

- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Ensuring there is a Children Missing Education Policy in place and that this is regularly reviewed and updated.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Appointing an Attendance Welfare Officer to work closely with the admin team and the Family Support Worker.
- Ensuring all parents/carers are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The Attendance Welfare Officer is responsible for:

- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Developing a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions.
- Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement.
- Communicating with pupils and parents/carers regarding attendance.
- Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance.
- Applying attendance interventions on a case by case basis.
- Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers.
- Working closely with the Family Support Worker to support families through the school's Early Help Offer.

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- Promoting good attendance and punctuality with their children.
- Informing the school of any reason for absence.

3. Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
Class staff complete registers by 9am. From 9am pupils will be marked as LATE
Registers close at 9:30am. Pupils arriving after this will be marked as UNAUTHORISED.
- Not attending school for any reason

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave (for example; sickness and diarrhoea = 48 hours)
- Medical or dental appointments which **unavoidably** fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- Leave granted by the headteacher for exceptional circumstances

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school without reason
- Absences which have never been explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed at 9:30am
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed

Persistent absence (PA):

- Missing 10 percent or more of schooling

4. Attendance expectations

Cotmanhay Infant and Nursery School has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents/carers and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school and for the full day.

The school day starts at 9am, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, **pupils will be welcomed into school from 8:45am.**

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked in class by 9:00am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark
- The morning register will close at 9:30am. Pupils will receive an unauthorised mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time
- The afternoon register will be taken in class at 1.30pm.

5. Absence procedures

Parents/carers must contact the school office via telephone or dojo message before 9:00am on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by the close of the morning register to report the absence, the Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO) will contact the parent/carer by telephone call, text message or dojo message as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school. If there is no response from the parent/carer, the AWO will contact all emergency contacts if necessary. School staff will make home visits (in accordance with 'Home Visit Risk Assessment') if no contact is made, as school absence is a safeguarding concern.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Safeguard all pupils.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness or if the illness has been ongoing for more than 3 days.

In the case of PA, arrangements will be made for parents/carers to speak to the Attendance Welfare Officer. The school will inform the LA, on a regular basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

6. Attendance register

The school uses RM Integris to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved educational visit
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

Attendance data is shared with Derbyshire County Council.

7. Authorising parental absence requests

Parents/carers will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The headteacher's decision is not subject to appeal.

Leave of absence

In September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. These regulations also state that leave cannot be granted retrospectively.

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents/carers to request leave using the official school absence request form. This should be handed in to the school office at least 2 weeks before the requested leave.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis. Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time to be authorised. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. Absence deemed for the reason of unauthorised leave in term time will be marked in the register with the Attendance code G.

You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents/carers will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents/carers will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

Religious observance

Parents/carers will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents/carers for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil's parents/carers would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least two weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

8. SEND and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHCPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health in accordance with the school's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

- Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days.
- Provide the LA with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying and supporting needs through an Early Help Assessment.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.

- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

9. Missing children

Please see the **Child Missing from School Protocol**.

10. Attendance intervention

The Attendance Welfare Officer and Headteacher / Family Support Worker will meet every two weeks to review each child's attendance. They will discuss and implement appropriate actions / interventions to parent/carers if they are concerned about any child's attendance:

- Below 96% - attendance letters will be sent to parents/carers, placing them on a 20 day monitoring period.
- If there is no improvement whilst under the monitoring period, then an Attendance Improvement Plan may be considered. This will be a formal contract agreed between the school and parent/carer.
- If there is none or minimal improvement, and the parent/carer is not engaging with the Attendance Improvement Plan and any other interventions deemed appropriate during meetings with the AWO. This may progress to a legally binding Education Supervision Order in the family court
- Where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate the case may be considered for a Penalty Notice in line with the National Framework or attendance prosecution in the Magistrates Court.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns and an Education Supervision Order is not appropriate or has not been successful, the case should be considered for S.17 or S.47 statutory social care intervention

The school will acknowledge outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

- Weekly attendance assembly with Headteacher or AWO.
- Prize draw for children with 100% attendance for the week.
- The class with the best attendance will look after 'Arnie Armadillo' or Rosie Bear (attendance mascots) and receive a certificate each.
- Each academic year, children with over 96% attendance will get a special certificate and their name entered into a raffle to win a special prize.

11. Penalty Notice

Penalty Notices (PN) may be issued to the parent/carer of a child as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered.

A PN can be issued where the pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is a least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absences (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time, plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes, all within 10 school weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years.

A PN will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days. (Inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was intent to be absent for term time leave).

A third PN cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years from the issue of the first one. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

12. Working with parents/carers to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents/carers and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

An attendance leaflet summarising the importance of attendance and how school monitor and support is given to parents/carers at least annually.

The school website has a section focused on attendance.

The school have an Attendance Welfare Officer to ensure strong communication between home and school.

The AWO uses dojo and letters to communicate with parents/carers.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents/carers are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents/carers will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents/carers are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the Attendance Welfare Officer will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents/carers to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in school, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the LA, and will encourage parents/carers to access support that they may need.

13. PA

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 50 percent, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school's duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

14. Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school's attendance target is 96 percent.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher. The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2025.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

15. Nursery Attendance – Addendum

Following staff consultation after the death of a 2-year-old child in Lincolnshire this addendum has been put together to ensure the safeguarding response to nursery absence is consistent.

Nursery absence is not statutory / compulsory, however when a parent / carer accepts the place in nursery for their child it is expected that they attend regularly.

Any absence needs to be followed up as this may be a safeguarding concern.

The following procedure shall be adopted by lead nursery staff and the Attendance Welfare Officer (AWO) and/or the Family Support worker (FSW):

For children on a CP plan, CIN, TAF, on or concerns radar, with a worker involved etc:

Day 1 of absence – contact to be made via Dojo and then telephone call if no response. Absence period to be ascertained and then the following procedure to be undertaken. Completed by nursery staff.

Day 2 – if still no contact, then Dojo and telephone call as Day 1. Completed by nursery staff.

Day 3 – if still no contact, then Dojo and telephone call by nursery staff. Followed up by informing the AWO/FSW and home visit to be undertaken.

If continued no contact with family, then concern to be addressed by the Designated Safeguarding Team.

For all other children:

We will make dojo contact on the third day of absence if no contact and then follow the same plan as stated above.