

Policy: **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Date: Summer 2026

Review date: Summer 2027

Authorised by: Governing Body

Updated by: Attendance Champion and Headteacher

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1. Aims and objectives

At Dunalley Primary School, we believe that excellent attendance is fundamental to ensuring every child is safe, happy, included and able to achieve their full potential. We therefore promote and encourage positive attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's journey with us, starting in our nursery provision. We are committed to giving every child the very best start in life and recognise that regular, punctual attendance plays a vital role in children's learning, wellbeing, social development and future success.

We recognise that improving attendance is everyone's responsibility and that building a culture of belonging, high expectations and strong relationships is central to securing consistently good attendance for all pupils.

We are committed to providing a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where pupils feel valued, connected and ready to learn. We understand that barriers to attendance can be wide ranging and complex; therefore, we work proactively with pupils, families, Gloucestershire County Council and external agencies to identify needs early and provide timely support.

We will:

- Promote a whole-school culture where good attendance is expected, celebrated and valued
- Ensure all pupils have access to a full-time education to which they are entitled
- Promote punctuality and establish positive routines for learning
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to remove barriers to attendance
- Identify patterns of absence at the earliest opportunity
- Provide targeted support for pupils who are vulnerable to persistent or severe absence
- Ensure attendance procedures are child-centred and consistent
- Safeguard children through effective first-day response and attendance monitoring systems
- Ensure all staff understand their role in improving attendance
- Reduce persistent absence and severe absence across the school

We expect pupils to arrive on time, ready to learn, every day that the school is open, and to attend for the full duration of both morning and afternoon sessions.

The school does not support [flexi-schooling](#) arrangements. This is because we are committed to providing pupils with a consistent, full-time educational experience and to avoiding disjointed patterns of education. We recognise that regular attendance has a direct impact on educational achievement, wellbeing, friendship development and future life chances.

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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007, as amended](#)

[The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)

[The Education \(Information about Individual Pupils\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy also reflects safeguarding duties set out in statutory guidance and recognises that unexplained absence may be an indicator of safeguarding concerns.

The school follows Gloucestershire County Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct and local authority attendance procedures.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Parents/carers are expected to:

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to:

- Ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time
- Contact the school via Edulink One (go to *Links & Communication* and then *Report an Absence*) by 8:45am on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day unless otherwise agreed
- Provide a clear reason for absence or lateness
- Maintain daily communication with school staff regarding attendance concerns through Edulink One
- Provide the school with at least two emergency contact numbers
- Ensure medical appointments are arranged outside school hours where possible
- Work collaboratively with the school and external agencies to improve attendance where concerns arise
- Engage positively with support plans, meetings and interventions
- Avoid taking holidays during term time
- Ensure routines support good attendance, punctuality and readiness for learning

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day unless there is a genuine reason preventing attendance
- Arrive punctually and prepared for learning
- Speak to a trusted adult if they are worried about attending school
- Engage positively with support offered to improve attendance
- Take increasing responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality as they grow older

The Governing Body are expected to:

- Promote the importance of good attendance across the school's ethos and strategic priorities
- Ensure the school fulfils statutory duties relating to attendance
- Monitor attendance data and challenge trends robustly
- Ensure policies and procedures are effective and equitable
- Ensure sufficient resources and training are available to support attendance improvement
- Hold leaders to account for the implementation and impact of attendance strategies
- Monitor the attendance of vulnerable groups and disadvantaged pupils
- Review persistent absence and severe absence data regularly

The link governor for attendance will meet regularly with the Attendance Champion to review attendance information and monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Leading a culture where excellent attendance is prioritised
- Ensuring this policy is implemented consistently
- Ensuring attendance is accurately recorded and monitored
- Monitoring school-level attendance data and reporting to governors
- Ensuring early help and intervention systems are effective
- Working with external agencies and the local authority where appropriate
- Requesting legal interventions where support has not secured improvement
- Ensuring attendance systems support safeguarding responsibilities

Working in partnership with the Headteacher, the **Attendance Champion** is responsible for:

- Promoting and maintaining a whole-school culture of high attendance expectations
- Monitoring and analysing attendance, absence and punctuality data daily, weekly and termly
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify trends, vulnerable groups and priorities for improvement
- Identifying pupils at risk of persistent or severe absence at the earliest opportunity
- Ensuring attendance concerns are addressed swiftly, consistently and in line with safeguarding procedures
- Leading attendance meetings, intervention planning and attendance review processes
- Coordinating targeted interventions, early help and multi-agency support
- Working closely with pastoral staff, family support staff, the SENDCo and safeguarding leads to remove barriers to attendance
- Conducting and overseeing first-day response procedures and following up unexplained absences promptly
- Maintaining accurate attendance records and clear records of communication with families
- Communicating attendance expectations and concerns clearly and sensitively with parents/carers
- Producing attendance reports and providing regular updates to school leaders, governors and relevant staff
- Sending half-termly Insight attendance reports to parents/carers
- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of attendance strategies and interventions
- Liaising with external agencies and the local authority where appropriate
- Advising the Headteacher regarding escalation procedures, including Notices to Improve and fixed penalty notices where necessary
- Escalating concerns appropriately where there is limited engagement or where safeguarding concerns arise

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Recording attendance accurately and promptly
- Creating an inclusive classroom environment where pupils feel welcome and valued
- Identifying emerging attendance concerns early
- Discussing attendance concerns with parents/carers where appropriate
- Supporting pupils returning after absence
- Promoting positive attendance through relationships and classroom culture

Administrative staff are responsible for:

- Taking messages from parents about absence and lateness on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the appropriate member of staff to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Keeping accurate and up to date records of calls and communication with parents
- School processes for recording attendance and absence
- We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register

All staff are responsible for:

- Promoting good attendance consistently
- Modelling positive attitudes towards attendance and punctuality
- Recognising barriers that may impact attendance
- Sharing concerns promptly with safeguarding and attendance leads
- Supporting pupils to feel safe, included and motivated to attend

4. School processes for recording attendance and absence

The school maintains an electronic attendance register in accordance with statutory requirements.

Registers are taken at the start of each morning session and once during the afternoon session.

The register will record whether pupils are:

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

Attendance registers will include:

- The original entry and any amendments
- The reason for amendment
- The date of amendment
- The name and role of the person making the amendment

Registers are retained for a minimum of six years.

Registration times

- Children in Reception, year 1 and year 2 are expected to **arrive by** 8.40am each day.
- Children in years 3, 4, 5 and 6 are expected to **arrive by** 8.45am each day.

These slightly staggered entry times aim to reduce congestion in roads around school.

The morning register opens at 8:50am and closes at 9:00am.

- Pupils arriving after the register has opened but before it closes will receive a late mark (Code L).
- Pupils arriving after the register has closed, but before afternoon registration, without an authorised reason will receive an unauthorised absence mark (Code U).

A roll call is taken and logged at the start of the afternoon session; however, the register is confirmed at the end of the school day. Attendance codes will be updated retrospectively to record occasions where families elect to collect their child before the end of the school day. This highlights the importance of children attending school for the full duration of both morning and afternoon sessions:

- Pupils in Reception, year 1 and year 2 finish their school day at 3.10pm
- Pupils in years 3, 4, 5 and 6 finish their school day at 3.15pm

Responding to ongoing punctuality concerns

The school recognises that poor punctuality has a significant impact on pupils' learning, wellbeing, sense of belonging and readiness to learn. Repeated lateness disrupts learning routines and may contribute to wider attendance concerns.

Punctuality is monitored daily by school staff and patterns of lateness are identified through regular attendance analysis.

The school will respond to ongoing punctuality concerns through a graduated and supportive approach which may include:

- Informal conversations with pupils and parents/carers
- Reminder messages and communication regarding start times and routines
- Monitoring periods and punctuality tracking
- Meetings with parents/carers to identify barriers and agree support strategies
- Pastoral support, Early Help or family support referrals where appropriate
- Individual attendance or punctuality plans
- Support for pupils experiencing anxiety or other barriers affecting punctuality
- Referrals to external agencies where concerns are ongoing

Where punctuality does not improve despite support and intervention, the school may escalate concerns in line with Gloucestershire County Council procedures. This may include formal attendance meetings, a Notice to Improve or a request for a Fixed Penalty Notice where the threshold for unauthorised absence has been met.

The school will always seek to work in partnership with families to secure sustained improvements in punctuality and attendance.

Absence procedures

Parents/carers must contact the school through Edulink One or by telephone message by 8:45am on the first day of absence.

Where no reason for absence is received:

- The school will contact parents/carers on the first day of absence
- Emergency contacts may be contacted if parents/carers are unavailable
- Home visits may be undertaken where safeguarding concerns exist
- The school may liaise with external agencies where appropriate

Absence due to illness will usually be authorised unless there are concerns regarding authenticity.

The school may request medical evidence where:

- Absence is frequent or patterned
- There are concerns regarding the authenticity of illness
- Attendance is below expected levels
- A child has significant levels of absence

Medical evidence may include:

- Appointment letters
- Prescriptions
- Medical advice
- Evidence of treatment

The school will not request 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.

We work in accordance with the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* and follow Gloucestershire County Council guidance in relation to attendance recording, coding and monitoring procedures.

We are committed to fairness, consistency and accuracy for all families when recording lateness and allocating attendance codes so that attendance information can be monitored daily and analysed effectively over time.

We ask all families to share this commitment to fairness by reporting the reason for absence honestly and accurately. Where information comes to light that suggests an absence has been reported incorrectly, the school is required to amend attendance codes in line with DfE and Gloucestershire County Council guidance.

This may include circumstances where children return to school with evidence of a holiday, inform staff that they have been away, friends disclose holiday information, electronic absence forms indicate a location, international ring tones are identified during absence calls, or holiday-related social media posts are shared publicly.

In such cases, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to provide evidence supporting the original reason for absence.

In line with national and local authority guidance, all unauthorised holidays are recorded using Code G. Where a pupil reaches the national threshold of 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school-week period, the school must consider requesting that Gloucestershire County Council issue a Notice to Improve or Fixed Penalty Notice in accordance with the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

These expectations are not determined by individual schools but form part of the statutory attendance framework set out by the DfE and Gloucestershire County Council to ensure fairness and consistency for all families.

5. Planned absence

Medical appointments

Medical and dental appointments should be arranged outside school hours wherever possible.

Where this is unavoidable:

- Parents/carers should notify the school in advance
- Evidence of the appointment may be requested
- Pupils should attend school before and/or after the appointment wherever possible
- All appointments on the last day of a half term will require evidence

Leave of absence during term time

The Headteacher will only authorise leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances.

Requests for leave must:

- Be made in writing using the school's Request for Leave form
- Be submitted at least four weeks in advance wherever possible
- Include supporting evidence where relevant

Each request will be considered individually, taking account of:

- The child's attendance history
- The child's educational needs
- The timing and duration of the request
- The impact on learning and progress
- The specific circumstances of the family

Exceptional circumstances may include:

- Significant family events
- Bereavement
- Religious observance
- Exceptional medical or welfare needs
- Circumstances deemed exceptional at the Headteacher's discretion

Family holidays during term time are not normally considered exceptional circumstances.

The school follows national attendance coding guidance and local authority procedures when recording authorised and unauthorised leave.

Procedures following unexplained absence

The school takes unexplained absence seriously because of the safeguarding risks associated with children missing education.

Where a child is absent and no reason has been provided, the school will:

1. Contact parents/carers on the first morning of absence
2. Attempt all emergency contacts where necessary
3. Record all communication attempts
4. Assess whether there are safeguarding concerns
5. Conduct home visits where appropriate
6. Liaise with safeguarding agencies and the police where concerns remain
7. Escalate concerns in line with Children Missing Education guidance where required

Attendance concerns are reviewed regularly and may result in:

- Informal meetings with parents/carers
- Attendance support plans
- Early Help referrals
- Referral to external agencies
- Attendance contracts
- Notice to Improve processes
- Requests for penalty notices
- Legal intervention where necessary
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6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Dunalley Primary School promotes attendance through a culture of belonging, encouragement and high expectations.

We recognise good attendance through:

- Positive communication with families
- Promotion of attendance values in PSHE and assemblies

- Personalised recognition of improved attendance as well as high attendance

The school promotes strong attendance by:

- Building positive relationships with pupils and families
- Supporting successful transitions into school and between year groups
- Providing a calm, inclusive and supportive environment
- Identifying barriers early and responding quickly
- Offering pastoral and emotional wellbeing support
- Supporting pupils with anxiety-based school avoidance
- Using restorative approaches and child-centred practice
- Providing consistent routines and expectations

Attendance is discussed regularly with pupils and families to reinforce its importance and ensure concerns are addressed early.

7. Attendance data monitoring, reporting and analysing

The school monitors attendance rigorously to ensure timely intervention.

Attendance data is reviewed:

- Daily by the Attendance Champion
- Weekly by senior leaders
- Regularly by the link governor

The school analyses:

- Whole-school attendance
- Persistent absence
- Severe absence
- Punctuality
- Attendance by year group
- Attendance of disadvantaged pupils
- Attendance of pupils with SEND
- Attendance of vulnerable groups

Parents/carers are informed regularly of their child's attendance through:

- The School App – Edulink One
- Attendance letters
- Parent consultations
- Reports
- Meetings and telephone calls
- Attendance review meetings

The school uses attendance data to:

- Identify emerging concerns quickly
- Inform intervention planning
- Evaluate the impact of support
- Compare attendance trends locally and nationally
- Ensure resources are targeted effectively

Attendance information is shared with governors regularly to support challenge and accountability.

8. Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is defined as attendance below 90%.

Severe absence is defined as attendance below 50%.

The school adopts a support-first approach while recognising that legal intervention may be necessary where support is not engaged with or attendance does not improve.

The school will:

- Identify pupils at risk of persistent absence early
- Monitor vulnerable pupils closely
- Develop personalised attendance support plans
- Work collaboratively with families and external agencies
- Remove barriers to attendance wherever possible
- Use graduated responses matched to need
- Provide pastoral and wellbeing support
- Consider reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEND or medical needs
- Maintain regular communication with families

Interventions may include:

- Attendance meetings
- Parenting support
- Early Help assessment
- Mentoring and pastoral support
- Emotional wellbeing support
- Reintegration plans
- Timetabled support and check-ins
- Referrals to external services
- Multi-agency meetings

Where attendance does not improve despite support, the school may escalate concerns through:

- Formal attendance letters
- Attendance contracts
- Notices to Improve
- Requests for Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution through the Magistrates' Court

The school recognises that some pupils face complex barriers to attendance and will work compassionately and persistently with families to secure improvement.

9. Legal sanctions

The school works closely with Gloucestershire County Council to ensure attendance expectations are met.

Where support and intervention have not secured improvement and unauthorised absence meets the national threshold, the school may request that the Local Authority issue a Notice to Improve or Fixed Penalty Notice.

Notices to Improve and Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct available [here](#).

The national framework states:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid within 28 days
- A second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period will be charged at £160
- A third offence within three years may result in prosecution

Legal intervention may be considered where:

- There is ongoing unauthorised absence
- Support has not been engaged with
- Attendance continues to decline
- There are concerns regarding educational neglect

The school will always seek to work positively with families before legal intervention is considered.

Under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, a parent is defined as:

- All natural parents, whether married or not
- Any person with parental responsibility
- Any person who has care of the child

10. Links to other policies and monitoring arrangements

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Children Missing Education Procedures
- Equality Information and Objectives

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where guidance or legislation changes.

The policy will be reviewed by the Headteacher and Attendance Champion and approved by the Governing Body.

