Attendance Policy

Cotsford Primary School

Approved by: Cotsford Primary Governing Body

Date approved: 3.11.2026

Review date: November 2027

Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Miss N Leighton	Head Teacher / Principal	Cotsford Primary School (0191) 586 4660
Mrs B Lamb	Senior Attendance Champion	Cotsford Primary School (0191) 586 4660
Miss L Hutton	Other senior leaders with responsibility for attendance	Cotsford Primary School (0191) 586 4660
	Governor with responsibility for attendance	Cotsford Primary School (0191) 586 4660

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: Mrs B Lamb, Attendance Lead, Cotsford Primary School. (0191) 5864660.

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Miss N Leighton	Headteacher	Cotsford Primary School (0191) 586 4660
Mrs D Dixon	Place2Be Manager	Cotsford Primary School (0191) 586 4660

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupil's whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. A pupil's place in school is at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Cotsford Primary School seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. Improving attendance is everyone's business and a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners is required.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the Working Together to improve school attendance statutory guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. To benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer we expect all pupils to attend every session they are able to attend.

Communication with our parents and pupils is vital to working together to support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date and changes are communicated to school as soon as possible. It is extremely important that school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from: 8:45am to 3.15pm.
Pupils enter via the Main School Gate and they line up on the yard to be taken to their class by their class teacher.

Registration is at 8.50am. The register will close at 9.20am.

Pupils must be in school for the start of registration to receive a present mark, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (**Code L**).

The DfE states that pupils must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration.

Pupils who arrive after the registers close will be recorded as a **Code U** unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence. It is still essential to come to school even if you are arriving after the registers close.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact the school office, if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:
All children arriving late at school will be asked the **reason for their lateness** and this will be recorded at the school office.

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions
They will be informed each half term if their child has any late marks recorded on the register.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality
If school continues to have concerns, we can offer: attendance at free breakfast club place, meet and greets for support, a meeting to discuss concerns, expectations and support or possible referral to the local authority for action if the absences continue and are unauthorised (U code).

Term dates and planned Inset days
School term dates and planned P D Days can be found on our school website: https://cotsfordprimary.durham.sch.uk/
Dates are also shared regularly on the school's Class Dojo whole school story.

Leave of Absence in Term Time
All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission, however Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission should be (academies)/ must be (maintained schools and non-maintained special schools) requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form. Forms are available from the school office.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

As a school, we take attendance and absence seriously. We will therefore follow this set procedure.

On the first day of absence
If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are expected to contact the School office on 0191 586 4660, providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school. The school office will call families to find out why the child is not in school.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. Attending school before an appointment is advised. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence
If a child is off for more than two days, then the school office team will ring for regular check updates about the child.

No reason for absence provided
If school cannot ascertain a reason for absence and there is no contact from home (e.g. a text or phone call to notify the parent that the pupil has not arrived at school for registration and to request a reason for absence. However, this may be escalated if there are welfare/safeguarding concerns and further calls or even a home visit may take place.

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 rolling school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate for irregular attendance and, if so, the matter will be referred to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will count as that evidence and can be accepted without question or concern.

Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. This will be requested when there is a need for clarification to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the pupil is not in school.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters, Class Dojo updates, and letters home;
- Promote the benefits of high attendance to pupils by pointing this out in weekly assemblies;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements in Friday Celebration assembly each week;
- Reward good or improving attendance;

Attendance data

We believe that excellent attendance at school will promote excellent learning. We monitor attendance every three weeks to look for patterns and trends, as well as ensure that attendance does not slip below the school target of 95%.

If we identify patterns of poor attendance, as soon as possible, we will endeavour to work with all parties to resolve them before they become entrenched.

We will look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

We will also consider pupil cohorts such as those who have free school meals; special educational needs or disabilities; pupil premium; children with a social worker; children in are etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents, via Class Dojo each week, as well as by sending home attendance certificates and slips at the end of each half term.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so that everyone can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent.

We will always strive to identify and support pupils with persistent absence as soon as we can, so that relevant support can be put in place to rectify the situation as quickly as possible.

As a school, we have access to wider support services who may be able to provide support with the barriers to attendance.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

We will always strive to identify and support pupils with persistent absence as soon as we can, so that relevant support can be put in place to rectify the situation as quickly as possible.

As a school, we will work with pupils, parents and partner services and agencies to provide additional support through a more formal, planned approach in conjunction with the local authority to prevent severe absence (persistently absent pupils 70% or below) – review Attendance Support Meeting involving the School Attendance Champion.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 rolling school week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, it should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to, a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Fixed Penalty Notice or Offence Investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. (DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. (DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet)

If penalty notices are not paid, then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

As a school, we will always strive to support pupils with specific needs. We will always apply attendance guidance fairly and consistently, whilst considering the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of a policy for pupils with specific needs a school must consider the obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs.

APPENDIX 1

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high aspirations of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include and early help or whole school family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance or education supervision order.

ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance thorough statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expect

Statement of expectation –

We all want the best for pupils and therefore aspire to have the highest attendance possible for each individual to allow them to access the education on offer to them in a culture they feel safe, part of the community and where they want to be.

Monitor

We will monitor registers closely and regularly, in order to identify and support attendance to enable school to address concerns at the earliest opportunity using a support first approach.

Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

Our school office team, as well as our Headteacher, Miss Leighton, are available in school to listen to any concerns which may be affecting attendance, or who will communicate with parents where concerns are identified by school. This should acknowledge attendance is everyone's responsibility and this is led by the Senior Attendance Champion – Miss Leighton - from the school leadership team.

Facilitate support

Cotsford Primary School intends to remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school and that this might include an early help or whole family plan where there are wider issues affecting attendance.

Cotsford Primary School will always follow a strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority.

Formalise support

If, for whatever reason, absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, school will work together, with the families, to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.