



Finlay Community School

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Attendance policy

Governor Committee Responsible:	Finlay Community School Combined Committee	Staff Lead(s):	Michelle Bryce
Status (Statutory / Advisory)	Statutory	Review Cycle	Annually
Last Review	September 2026	Next Review Date	September 2027
Chair of Governors	Mike Adlam chair@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk		

Aims and objectives

At Finlay Community School we believe that improving attendance is everyone's business. Providing a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn is the foundation of securing good attendance at Finlay Community School. Working together to put the right support in place at the right time, in conjunction with all staff in school, parents/carers, pupils, Gloucestershire County Council and other local partners, we aim to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships.

Regular attendance is fundamental to the future success of children. We expect pupils to be in school for every session of the school day and for every day that the school is open to them.

Our objectives are to promote good attendance, ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled. By acting early to address patterns of absence we aim to reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence.

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](#)

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

Roles and responsibilities

Parents/carers are expected to:

- In Education Law (Section 576 of the Education Act 1996) 'parent' includes natural parents as well as anyone who has parental responsibility, or who has care of a child. There may be people other than natural parents who have responsibility for, and are entitled to be consulted about, a child's education.
- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.20am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected

to return

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Update school in writing via email at admin@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk with new contact details should they change – both telephone and email should be kept updated.
- Ensure that a login is created for Edulink and that it is accessed regularly as this is the main source of school communication, messages regarding absence/leave of absence requests etc are sent out via this application. Parents are able to access attendance data for their child/children via the app.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day, and to show evidence of appointments in advance
- Proactively engage with support offered informally or formally to help your child overcome any barriers to attendance

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

The Governing body are expected to:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteacher (Co-Headteachers Hannah Williams and Heather Willis) are responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Requesting the issue of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader and Attendance Champion - Michelle Bryce, Family Services Manager email: michelle.bryce@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk is responsible for:

- Championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes including the efficacy of the school's strategies for attendance
- Having a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school
- Communicating messages to pupils and parents
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Where there is a lack of engagement, holding more formal conversations with parents and raising the issue of the potential need for legal intervention.

The school Attendance Officer Tori Bowen (email Victoria.bowen@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with school staff e.g., pastoral lead/family liaison officer/SENDCo to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher (or other member of staff authorised by the headteacher) when to issue a Fixed-Penalty Notice or Notice to Improve.

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting the information to the school office *no later than 9.20am the time the school register is closed or as close as possible to this time.*

School administration/office staff are responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the appropriate member of staff in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Keeping accurate and up to date records of calls and communication with parents

School processes for recording attendance and absence

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register using Edulink and SIMS.

We will take our attendance register at the start of each morning session of the school day and once during each afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Absent
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- Any amendment to the attendance register will include
 - The original entry
 - The amended entry
 - The reason for the amendment
 - The date on which the amendment was made
 - The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the school attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2024
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50 am on each school day.

The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open for 30 minutes until 9.20am. The register for the afternoon session will be taken after the lunch period at 1.15 pm and will be kept open for 30 minutes until 1.45 pm.

Absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for an unplanned absence on the first day by 8.50 am or as soon as practically possible by calling or emailing the school.

Parents can notify school by calling 01452 530310 and speaking to a member of the school administration team or leave a voicemail. An Email can also be sent to admin@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Where a child has been absent for 5 days parents will be contacted and a home visit will be arranged.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late using the appropriate code L
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate code U - this is an unauthorised absence.

The Attendance Officer will identify patterns and trends in punctuality issues. Teachers should promptly report instances of lateness to the designated staff member. Parents should inform the school of any lateness due to exceptional circumstances.

The Local Authority has the power to prosecute parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at school. Schools can, in some circumstances, request that the Local Authority issue a Notice to Improve notification and/or Penalty Notice where parents have failed to secure regular attendance at school. A Notice to Improve will be sought where 10 sessions of unauthorised absence are recorded in a 10-week period where no improvement has been seen following communication to parents/carers. Parents /carers will be notified of this in writing.

Children in Care

- The school recognises that children in care form a vulnerable group of learners. Regular attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign for a range of safeguarding issues. For these reasons, when monitoring and following up attendance issues the school

will prioritise children from vulnerable groups including children in care. If a child in care is not attending or there are concerns about their attendance, the school will immediately seek advice from the Local Authority's Virtual School and the child's social worker, as well as communicating with the child and parent/carer.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as 'one off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 6 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via school office or email admin@finlay.gloucs.sch.uk The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad (Code C1)
- Attending a medical or dental appointment (Code M)
- Attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution (Code J1)
- Studying for a public examination (Code S)
- Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school (Code X)
- Compulsory school aged pupil subject to a part-time timetable (Code C2)
- Exceptional circumstances (see definition above) (Code C)
- Parent travelling for occupational purposes – The pupil is a mobile child, and their

parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged with a trade or business of such nature as to require them to travel from place to place (Code T)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart (Code R)
- Illness (Code I)

Procedures following unexplained absence

- School staff will call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. An absence message will also be sent via Edulink.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and record it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- If no reason for absence has been provided despite attempts to contact parents/carers, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may, where considered necessary, carry out a home visit to the pupil's address, inform relevant outside agencies, contact the police etc
- In the instance of continued unauthorised absence that are not requested leave of absence, School can request a Notice to Improve from GCC to be issued to parents. This will be considered for 10 instances of unauthorised absence within a 10-week period. This includes persistent lateness past registration cut off resulting in a U mark, O marks recorded for unauthorised absence and N where no reason has been provided. Parents will be required to show improvement to a pupil's attendance within a specified time-frame or a Penalty Notice can be issued by GCC.
- During a period where a Notice to Improve is in place, evidence of a GP appointment in support of illness will be requested.

Strategies for promoting good attendance

As a school, we have carefully considered the potential impact of attendance-based rewards, out of concern that such incentives could be counterproductive.

There is a risk that these rewards might inadvertently shame or undermine vulnerable pupils, and reinforce the idea that attendance is a special achievement rather than an expected norm. At Finlay Community School, we have opted for a more holistic approach that focuses on fostering a positive and inclusive school culture, valuing the presence and participation of all our pupils.

Our attendance strategy emphasises early intervention, targeted support, and collaborative partnerships with families to address the root causes of any attendance concerns. By taking

this approach, we aim to promote regular attendance as an integral part of our pupils' educational experience, without creating a sense of exclusion or differentiation for those who may face additional challenges.

Our goal is to ensure that all pupils feel valued, supported, and empowered to engage fully with their learning. We have made the conscious decision not to use rewards for good attendance, as this decision is rooted in our concerns about the potential for unfairness and demotivation, as well as the impact on pupils' intrinsic motivation. These considerations are particularly relevant when working with pupils who have special educational needs or health conditions.

At Finlay, we believe that good attendance should be seen as the norm, rather than something that requires external incentives. By fostering a school culture that values and supports regular attendance, our pupils will be more likely to develop a sense of responsibility and ownership over their own learning.

The school's strategies for promoting and improving attendance are:

- Weekly celebration of good attendance in assemblies
- Work closely with parents to support regular attendance – for example, communicating early about issues and acknowledging positive improvements.
- An attendance notice board which is visible for all parents and staff.
- Termly Attendance Bulletin to communicate with parents the importance of good school attendance and to promote positive attitudes towards attendance to the school community
- Work closely with parents/carers where children's attendance has fallen below 90%
- Children have an attendance target on their My Plans due to the impact that this has on their learning.

Attendance data monitoring, reporting and analysing

The school will:

- Regularly inform parents of their child's attendance levels via letter and meetings
- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Provide regular attendance reports to teachers, SENDCO, Senior Leadership where

- needed, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing Persistent and Severe absence from support to legal intervention.

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school. Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will use attendance data to monitor pupil attendance and identify patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.

Where persistent or severe absence is identified the school will apply the following steps:

- Persistent or Severe absence is identified – pupil drops below 90% attendance or 50% in cases of severe absence
- Parent/Carer will be contacted and invited for an Attendance Improvement Meeting (AIM)
- School will listen to and help parents/carers access wider support services to aid in the removal of barriers to attendance
- Medical evidence in support of absence will be requested where a pupil is persistently or severely absent and the reason given is of a physical or mental health related nature
- Attendance for pupils who are persistently or severely absent will be monitored weekly
- Regular communication and review meetings will be held with parents/carers
- Where necessary a formalised approach will be implemented. A Parent/Carer Attendance Improvement Agreement will be put in place to create a partnership between families and school to help improve attendance. This will outline the expectations of the school to aid in improving attendance.
- Where a formalised approach does not lead to improved attendance, school is required to follow a formal process of legal intervention in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council.
- Formalised support can include parenting contracts, requesting of a fixed penalty notice or notice to improve, engagement with social services, an Education Supervision Order or consideration of attendance prosecution in the Magistrates Court
- A Notice to Improve will be sought where the threshold for unauthorised absence is met (10 sessions within 10 weeks – each school day is comprised of two sessions AM and PM). Schools can request that the Local authority issues parents with a Notice to Improve that will state a period in which there are to be no further unauthorised absences. Parents/Carers will be notified first in writing with a warning of Notice to Improve. Should further unauthorised absences occur then Parents/Carers will be notified in writing that a
- Where deemed necessary, schools can choose to extend this period and Parents/Carers will be notified of this via letter. Failure to comply with the Notice to Improve will result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice through the Local Authority.

Legal sanctions

The school must consider requesting Gloucestershire County Council issue a fine to parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age and the national threshold has been met. Fixed penalty notices are issued in accordance with the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct [Attendance - Schoolsnet \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/attendance-schoolsnet)

If issued with a fine or penalty notice each parent must pay £80 (per child) if paid within 21 days rising to £160 thereafter. If not paid within 28 days the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice – note there is no right of appeal in court by parents against a fixed penalty notice. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period (the second one being payable at £160 with no option to reduce fine by making payment earlier). If the national threshold is met for a third (or subsequent) time within 3 years, the Local Authority will consider prosecution through the magistrates' court under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

In Education Law (Section 576 of the Education Act 1996) 'parent' means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or pupil
- Any person who has care of a child or pupil i.e. lives with and looks after the child

Following an exclusion, any child seen in a public place within 5 days following an exclusion from school will be subject to a fine of £60/£120 and is not subject to the rolling three-year period.

All attendance information for Gloucestershire schools can be found on the GCC website via the following link:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/hn1afkus/gcc-pn-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Links to other policies and monitoring arrangements

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum once a year by Michelle Bryce Family Services Manager

At every review the policy will be approved by the full governing body.