BATTLEDOWN CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE HANDBOOK

January 2024

Approved by:	Headteacher	Date: 12/1/24
Last reviewed on:	January 2024	
Next review due by:	September 2024	

Legal Framework:

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states, that children of the compulsory school ages (5 – 16) should attend school regularly. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parent/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Legal Requirements for all Schools:
- Schools must keep two registers: an admission register which serves as the school roll, and an attendance register
- Attendance registers must be called twice a day, at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session
- The register must show whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity, off-site or absent
- When a pupil is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised
- Authorised absence means either the school has given approval in advance, or that a satisfactory explanation was given afterwards

The Government expects schools and Local Authorities to:
- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and, act early to address patterns of absence
- Expect parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly
- Ensure all pupils to be punctual to their lessons

Attendance data will be monitored by the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team, with a formal data report on pupil attendance submitted termly to the Local Advisory Board (LAB) and Trustees of SAND AT as part of the Head Teacher report to Trustees. This report will outline if there are any concerns in relation to pupil attendance and any impact of pupil attendance on progress over time. Where there have been non-attendance issues within the school the Head Teacher will collate examples of case studies/summaries which evidences the approach taken by the school in addressing pupil attendance.

Aims of this attendance strategy:
- To secure an informed approach by school to attendance and how this is monitored/recorded/reported in accordance with statutory guidance
- To establish systems of following up all absences to ensure that safeguarding is and remains effective
- To ensure that all absences are correctly identified
- To ensure clear distinctions are made which considers the pupils' disabilities and/or SEND through data sets published
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering/analysing/reporting attendance related data providing reports to LAB/Trustees each term
- To provide a means by which the school can record/monitor attendance of the pupils/students and to intervene positively as required
- To ensure that school provides an appropriate response to improve the overall percentage attendance which maximise opportunities for all pupils to learn/achieve
- To determine the protocols to monitor attendance effectively establishing pathways to deal with any attendance issues working with external agencies if/as required in an informed way (e.g. – Social Care, Inclusion Officer)

- To identify appropriate protocols which recognise the individual needs of pupils when planning actions to prevent academic regression
- To reduce unauthorised attendance if this becomes an issue
- To identify appropriate protocols to pursue the re-integration of pupils following periods of significant absence

Role and Responsibilities of the Attendance Officer (HT):

At Battledown, the Head Teacher acts as the attendance officer. Data entry and administration of attendance is completed by the Admin Team. They will work with the HT, SLT, Family Worker and other school staff, parents, pupils, and outside agencies to ensure the positive attendance of the pupils. The attendance officer will be responsible for monitoring attendance throughout the school to the agreed attendance benchmark, meeting all statutory and legal requirements in the process.

The Admin Team will be required to:

- Use Integris to monitor attendance/pupil absence daily maintaining this to a high standard. The HT will provide strategic monitoring. SAND AT HR central service will provide support with attendance as necessary.
- Be the first point of contact to support school-based staff with operational issues in the use of Integris related issues.
- Track pupil attendance by collecting and analysing attendance data daily reporting to the HT by 10.30am at the latest.
- Ensure school/office-based records are maintained to a high quality and in accordance with the MAT attendance policy.
- Provide accurate termly/yearly attendance data / information for school-based reports to the Head Teacher, Local Governing Body, Trustees, and the annual report to parents.
- Produce individual attendance data when requested by the HT/DSL/DDSL.
- Advise all agencies on pupil attendance information as appropriate to any identified changes.
- To be responsible for the daily fire register in case of any emergency (paper-based register).
- To be responsible for the electronic signing-In evacuation list (staff/volunteers/school-based visitors etc) in case of any evacuation of the school.
- Act as the first line of contact to parents/carers in relation to attendance, advising them, when able, on ways they can ensure their child attends school
- Contact any parents/carers of any absent pupil using parentmail texting service/ telephone to identify reason for any pupil absence; log all calls on CPOMS.
- When requested to gather information that records potential reasons for any pupil's non-attendance
- Provide any information requested by parents/carers in relation to attendance/ exceptional circumstances
- Always maintain confidentiality.

The Attendance Registers:
Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that children between the ages of 5 – 16 should attend school regularly. The law requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on both registers. The proprietor of a school who fails to comply with these regulations is guilty of an offence and can be fined (DfE – November 2016).

Registers:
Teachers must:
- Complete the register on INTEGRIS by 9.45am and 1.30pm

Contents of Attendance Register

Classes must take the attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and once at the beginning of the afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

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

Every child attendance/absence is recorded using the agreed code on the class register on Integris. This information is then made available to the Local Authority and the DfE.

Follow-up of every absence:

Once class registers are completed, the Admin Team will scrutinise them and identify from the information provided by the class teacher if any children are absent; this will record name, reason for absence and who notified the school. In this way the school/office team will have been provided with an explanation of the absence by the class team. If the explanation has not come directly from the pupil's parent/carer, the admin team will contact the parent/carer to clarify/confirm the reason recorded. Pupils' non-attendance reported by passenger escorts will not be accepted. The school will remind all parents on a Termly basis the protocols which need to be followed by them in reporting their child's absence from school.

Through the regular scrutiny of attendance records on Integris, the Head Teacher, DSL and FSW, will be able to identify any concerns in relation to attendance particularly in relation to any aspects of the safeguarding chronology held by the school.

If a pupil is beginning to show a sporadic attendance record and this is not linked to any on-going medical complaint or additional reason of which the school is aware, the school will attempt to rectify this with the parents. The Head Teacher will contact the parents initially via an email/telephone call to discuss and clarify reasons for lower attendance (all telephone conversations will be logged by the school on CPOMS). This will always be followed up with a letter outlining what has been discussed / agreed. If any issues continue, the Head Teacher will write to the parents / carers inviting them to a meeting (alongside social care colleagues if / as appropriate) to discuss the reason(s) why attendance continues to decline and agree an attendance improvement plan to rectify this.

If the child concerned continues to attend school sporadically following these measures, this will be discussed with the MASSH Team / the Inclusion Officer for their advice and guidance as outlined within our Safeguarding Policy.

The school will discuss any pupil whose absence from school is recorded outside of the medical / illness code used in the register. The HT meets monthly with the FSW, DSL and Assessment Lead to discuss such concerns. During these meetings, the school can additionally discuss any concerns in relation to the wellbeing of pupils; all discussions are recorded in the confidential minutes made.

Reporting non-attendance:

We expect **all** parents/carers to report their child's non-attendance to the school. We will **not** accept reasons for non-attendance which are relayed through the passenger escort on school transport. Any pupils recorded in the register as non-attending will be followed up by the Admin Team.

Safeguarding:

All daily registers are scrutinised by the Admin Team (this includes any non-attendance). The Admin Team will additionally record the measures taken to contact parents/carers in relation to pupil non-attendance on CPOMS. Through the receipt of the daily attendance information the DSL/DDSLs can secure safeguarding; trends over time can be identified through such means and appropriate actions taken if necessary.

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
The HT and/or DSL will scrutinise the attendance information emailed via the Admin Team **each** morning and any unauthorised absence will be immediately addressed.

Attendance Data
It is recognised that there are **no national attendance data sets** to benchmark our pupil's attendance although through research we have identified the following averages:

National average absence rate special schools	9.1%	Battledown attendance target:
National average mainstream	5.2%	**90% or above**

It is our aim, therefore, to scrutinise our attendance data to determine reasons for non-attendance to ensure we do not exceed the data benchmark.
The Attendance Officer will gather attendance summary reports on Integris weekly and at each term end.

Data for each pupil whose attendance falls below the school's benchmark (90%) adding supporting commentary if/as required. Attendance data will be reported to the LGB/Trustees each term.

Verified data:
We know that children with SEND have greater levels of absence from school than do their mainstream peers. This is usually as a <u>direct</u> result of their impairments (attending therapy sessions, medical appointments or for surgical intervention for example), but it can often be the result of an <u>indirect</u> consequence of their 'condition'. For example: a child may experience a seizure just as the transport arrives to take them to school, forcing them to miss it. The child's inability to attend school is not 'Illness', as once they have recovered from the seizure, he/she would have been fit to attend school but could not now get into school due to transport/mobility issues. Many of our children with autism also experience chronic anxiety, which can prevent their attendance at school. Unfortunately, the agreed attendance codes do not cover situations like this, which places our children into a disadvantageous position. In attempting to overcome this, we have expanded the use of the C code (other authorised circumstances) to include condition related absences and hospice stays. By doing this, we can provide more sophisticated data which more accurately reflects the complex situation experienced by our children.

The attendance of all pupils will be formally discussed at each pupil's Annual Review with parents / carers and recorded via our Annual Report to parents. Attendance data will be formally recorded within the review paperwork provided by the Local Authority. Attendance data will additionally be recorded in the electronic e-PEPs paperwork for all Looked After Children (LAC); this will be the responsibility of the designated Child in Care Lead.

Persistent absences:
The HT will provide a summary of the attendance data for <u>any</u> pupil who has been recognised as falling below the 90% persistent absence level. As outlined above, the HT will scrutinise all such data to identify reasons to verify data. If reasons <u>do not</u> relate to specified attendance codes or there appears to be emerging patterns/themes, an alert will be created to trigger school action, including contacting the Inclusion Officer at GCC or raising a MARF.

Role of the Inclusion Officer:
To address any continued/persistent pupil absences, the school will refer the pupil to the Inclusion Officer with a view to improving the situation. Parents will be notified of such measures. The school will provide the following information to inform the future work of the IO:
- Reason for referral and any other relevant information
- Prior action taken by referrer (include details of contact with parents, attendance improvement plan, attendance improvement meetings)
- Attendance data

The school will work with the IO in the pursuit of any recommendations made, reviews of such work, and the impact of this will be agreed with the IO.

Exceptional circumstances:
The school recognises the pressures placed upon families with a child with SEND and the need for respite. We also recognise that the additional costs involved in taking such children on holiday can make them prohibitive, often to the point where the family could not afford them. In many cases, the only option is to take the holiday when costs are lower, or times are quieter for the child (e.g., if the child is autistic) within school term times. Without condoning it, the school recognises that this is sometimes the only option available to some families. To address this, the school has developed a protocol on how it manages pupil leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. To support this process, our schools will undertake a risk assessment to secure safeguarding. If the school has any doubt regarding the safety of any pupil whose parent has requested an exceptional circumstance this will be discussed with the CEO/LADO/Social Care/MASSH Team with immediate effect. In accordance with established protocols any Looked After Child will not be authorised for any leave of absence from the school without discussing this with their allocated social worker.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday:
Pupils are not entitled to be away from school during term time because of a family holiday. Such absences will be recorded as unauthorised. Leave of absence will be granted in very exceptional circumstances on application to the Headteacher. These requests should be made by writing in advance to the Headteacher and permission is subject to their discretion. If parents wish to make such a request, they should request a copy of the Parental Request for Leave of Absence during Term Time form from the Admin Team, which on completion will be considered by the HT.

Religious Observance:
Pupils will be granted two days per year to attend any religious observance. Parents will be expected to request such non-attendance via the HT.

Operation Encompass:
The school will take notice of any child who has been subject to an Operation Encompass telephone call. If a child is absent this will immediately be followed up with contact via MASSH/Social Care/CEO/LADO. All details will be recorded in the school's safeguarding chronology on CPOMS.

Pupils with Long Term Health Issues:
If a pupil is unable to attend school because of long term health issues, then they may be referred to the Gloucestershire Hospital Education Service (GHES), so that trained teachers from GHES can deliver learning at home. Any pupil who has a prolonged stay in hospital will be discussed with the school nurse who will become the conduit for all health-related information between the school/health care providers. Any such discussions will be formally recorded on CPOMS. The class teacher can provide remote learning, live lessons and learning resources, which will be discussed between the school, nurse, and parents(s).

Flexi-schooling:
Another option is to register a pupil for "Flexi-schooling" where a pupil can be educated off site for specific reasons. If flexi-schooling is agreed by the school, we will follow the protocols determined by the Local Authority. Any flexi-schooling agreement will be discussed/ agreed by the LAB and recorded as such in the minutes held. Review of the flexi-school agreement will occur at the end of each term with the parent.

Off-site provision:
Very rarely, when school can no longer meet need and a pupil is waiting for a new school placement, they may receive their education off-site. Any such provision will have been agreed with the Local Authority and will be documented as such within their Annual Review paperwork. As such, the school remains responsible for the education, safety, and welfare of the pupil.
To monitor this arrangement, the school will:
- agree the aims/outcomes of the out of school provision/school offer with the Local Authority (record all aims/outcomes/frequency of visits within the agreed documentation provided by the LA)

- Ensure any out of school provider has the appropriate DBS checks and are compliant with the Keeping Children Safe in Education documentation and submits daily attendance data to the school and a weekly report.
- Record the number of pupils learning off-site within the Head Teacher's report to Trustees/LAB

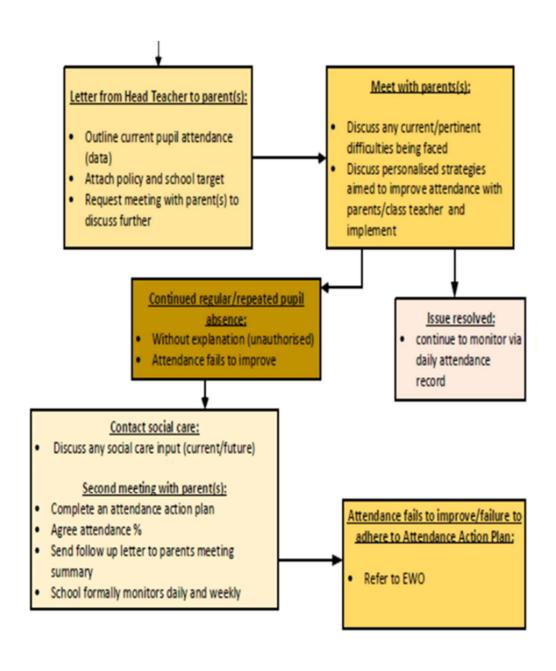| Attendance Case Summary			
Pupil Name:	Pupil Needs/Banding profile: Main area of need: Diagnosis and associated difficulties:	Attendance data 201X – 201X: XX%	School benchmark: 92%
Context: ☐			
Actions/interventions taken by the school:			
☐			
IMPACT: ☐			
Attendance: Autumn Term 201X – XX%	Attendance: Spring Term 201X – XX%	Attendance: Summer Term 201X – XX%	

Attendance flowchart
Appendix B

Pupil Absent
School to hold 3 x contact telephone numbers for ALL pupils

Parents not informed school

Office staff to phone parent to obtain reason; log time/date of call

Office staff – no answer from home; office team telephone contacts 1 and 2 using pupil information provided – log phone call

Parent informs the school of absence

Office staff to continue phoning and alert DSL/SLT. Update CPOMS if required.

Office will update Integris and CPOMS and will record reason for absence.

Office staff make contact with parent and obtain reason

If no continued answer by 10.30, DSL/SLT will make informed decision if to contact MARU helpdesk **if there are safeguarding concerns** current or historic **(check safeguarding chronology/log)**. Relay concerns & seek advice/social worker name if/as applicable – contact social worker

DSL/SLT to scrutinise daily attendance records sent via email from the office team (by 10.30) to identify any concerns in particular in relation to:

- Safeguarding
- Patterns of absence / trends over time

No allocated SW / Still concerned? Make a visit to the home address. / No answer? Telephone the police outlining your concerns and seek their advice.

DSL/SLT to write to parents/carers to remind of protocols in relation to reporting pupil absence or if there is a concern relating to attendance. Arrange to meet with parents to discuss any potential issues arising, providing date/time of appointment; record outcomes of meeting and what has been agreed. Persistent absenteeism – arrange to meet with EWO and parent/carer – plan strategy to increase attendance.

HT/SLT to report on a termly basis to LGB/CEO/Trustees using agreed format as set out in policy. Attendance meetings/phone calls where there are concerns. Discuss attendance at internal multi-agency meetings with Social Care managers if trends are forming over time for ANY pupil/student within the school.

Attendance Intervention Strategy
Attendance has been identified as failing below school target.
Attendance recorded as unauthorised
INITIAL ACTION – Check safeguarding records (CPOMS); contact Social Care if <u>any</u> safeguarding concerns.

Letter from Head Teacher to parent(s):

- Outline current pupil attendance (data)
- Attach policy and school target
- Request meeting with parent(s) to discuss further

Meet with parents(s):

- Discuss any current/pertinent difficulties being faced
- Discuss personalised strategies aimed to improve attendance with parents/class teacher and implement

Continued regular/repeated pupil absence:
- Without explanation (unauthorised)
- Attendance fails to improve

Issue resolved:
- continue to monitor via daily attendance record

Contact social care:
- Discuss any social care input (current/future)

Second meeting with parent(s):
- Complete an attendance action plan
- Agree attendance %
- Send follow up letter to parents meeting summary
- School formally monitors daily and weekly

Attendance fails to improve/failure to adhere to Attendance Action Plan:

- Refer to EWO

Persistent or Severe Absence (below 90% or 50%)

Contact parents/carers to discuss attendance. Letter to be sent home or contact via Parentmail. Discuss with pupil if appropriate.

School to implement support for pupil and family relevant to information given via the phone call.

School to initiate third party involvement where necessary to support. School to assist in improving attendance using appropriate funding where available.

Interventions and support by school to continue until attendance is no longer a concern.

Is attendance continuing to cause concern?

Yes

No—no further action

Appropriate third parties notified of concerns (where applicable)

SLT, FSW and key staff notified

Parents/Guardians invited to a meeting

Attendance improving and parents engaged. Attendance to continue to be monitored. No further action unless attendance improvement deteriorates

Second meeting organised if parents do not attend meeting 1, or outcome is unsatisfactory. Letter to be sent highlighting

Parental engagement in place. Pupil attendance to be monitored until no longer a concern. School to continue support as relevant.

Attendance continues to be a concern. Parents not engaged. IO and other agencies as appropriate contacted.

Legal proceedings initiated by school or external agencies

SAND ACADEMIES TRUST

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION (CME)

Battledown FLOWCHART

DEFINITION: those children who do not arrive at school and there is no explanation for their absence.

Contact made by school on day 1 via phone or text.

- Contact parents/carers
- Contact relatives/friends
- Contact siblings including in other schools
- Alert relevant school staff
- Contact other relevant schools

Within 10 school days that the child is missing, school carries out searches.

On day 1 of absence, unless otherwise agreed, if a child has a Child Protection Plan, or school have safeguarding concerns, the school should notify the local social care team:

MASH helpdesk 01452 426565

or

Pupils' social worker

BY DAY 11 LATEST:

Refer to CME (Brian Gazzard) via form 50 – email Brian.Gazzard@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Tel: 01452 328446

Record absence as unauthorised (Integris)

If child not found by school by 20 school days, contact CME re Rolling Off advice.

CME will:

Record on CME register

Carry out searches including alerting MAT to visit old address

---

If child found by CME:

MAT or CME will contact school and advise off role date

If child found by school:

Inform CME (Brian Gazzard) that child is found. Brian.Gazzard@gloucestershire.gov.uk

tel 01452 328446

PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE - IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
Request form

PUPIL NAME		
DATES REQUESTED – *FROM* (Insert first date of absence):		
DATES REQUESTED – *TO* (Insert last date of absence):		
TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOL DAYS:		
I request leave of absence for the above-named child due to the following exceptional circumstance(s): -		
If holiday request, please state destination:		
Accompanying adults & their relationship to child:		
To counteract any missed teaching and learning, my child will: -		
Is there anything else that you feel would enhance the above? -		
Signed (Parent/carer):		
I/we understand if we do not provide sufficient information the school can decline this request	Signed (Parent/carer):	

Battledown **PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES – Reply form**	
To the parents/carers of:	
Request approved/not approved for your child to have a leave of absence (exceptional circumstances)	**APPROVED** **NOT APPROVED**
If exceptional circumstances have been declined and you would like an appointment to discuss any aspect further, please telephone the school office to request an appointment with the Head Teacher	
FROM (first date of absence)	
TO (last date of absence	
Request/Destination:	
Head Teacher's Signature:	
Date:	