# Attendance policy 2023/24

# Conifers Primary School

UNCRC Article 28: Every child has the right to an education

| Approved by: | Andrew Johnson (Headteacher) | Date: September 2020 |
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| Last reviewed on: | September 2023 | |
| Next review due by: | September 2024 | |

## Contents

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*The staff and Governors at Conifers Primary School are committed to providing the best quality education to enable every child to THRIVE, in a fun and safe learning environment. Attendance is at the heart of our school policy and we strive to ensure that all children are in school and on time, every single day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.*

## 1. Aims and Principles

Non-attendance at school is one of the single biggest blocks to achievement. Whether absence is due to illness, term-time holidays, other condoned absences, or truancy, not being at school disadvantages children. By focusing on good attendance, we can make a significant impact across the range of outcomes for which we are held accountable, including those relating to school standards and closing attainment gaps. By offering our children an exciting curriculum, personalised learning, a safe and enjoyable environment to work in and an ethos of inclusion, we foster a coherent and an effective approach to tackling the problems associated with persistent absenteeism. Setting good patterns of attendance is vital.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. All children should be in school, on time, every day that school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. This Policy should not be seen in isolation but is a strand that underpins all other policies related to the wellbeing of children including safeguarding and behaviour.

### Every School Day Counts

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 0 days off school | 100% | Perfection |
| Equates to 2 days off school each year | 99% | Excellent |
| Equates to 5 days off school each year | 97% | Good |
| Equates to 10 days off school each year | 95% | Slight Concern |
| Equates to 20 days off school each year | 90% | Concerned |
| Equates to 30 days off school each year | 85% | Very Concerned |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 days absence over the whole year **97% - 100%** Good chance of success and progress | 20 days absence over the whole year **90%** Less chance of success. Harder to make progress | 20+ days absence over the whole year **Under 90%** Detrimental to success and progress |

### Every Minute Counts

**LATENESS = LOST LEARNING**
(Figures below are calculated over a school year)

| | |
|---|---|
| 5 Minutes late each day | 3 days lost! |
| 10 Minutes late each day | 6.5 days lost! |
| 15 Minutes late each day | 10 days lost! |
| 20 Minutes late each day | 13 days lost! |
| 30 Minutes late each day | 19 days lost! |

**Be at the classroom on time and ready to learn!**

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 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)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data at all Full Governing Body Meetings
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### 3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is 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
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### 3.3 The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance

The Designated Senior Leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and

- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

### 3.4 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office via SIMs every morning by 9.10 and every afternoon.
- Following up attendance concerns with children and families
- Reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Building positive relationships with the children in their class
- Providing an interesting, challenging and engaging curriculum
- Promoting, encouraging and supporting whole school attendance challenges and strategies

### 3.5 School Office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Emotional Health & Family Liaison Lead and/or Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Report concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Produce a daily attendance report to detail absent children for the day with actions taken
- Report any unexplained daily absence as a Safeguarding concern and notify the parents/carers via a safeguarding communication message.  A safeguarding message will be sent to parents/carers if no contact has been made by lunchtime

### 3.6 Emotional Health & Family Liaison Lead:

Our school Emotional Health & Family Liaison Lead will:

- Deliver targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Signpost parents/carers to support services
- Deal discretely and properly with any problems notified to the school by the parent/carer
- Work with parents/carers to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance and involve other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse, Early Help.
- Provide emotional support to children
- Provide emotional support to parents/carers
- Support children to attend school by offering meet and greets

### 3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and on time at 8.50am
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am 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 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

**3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time at 8.50am
- Follow the school learning and behaviour charters
- Engage in their learning
- Contribute their opinions about attendance class prizes and rewards


## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

- We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.
- We will take our attendance register at the start of each school day and straight after the lunchtime break. It will mark whether every pupil is:
- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- 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
- See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:
- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.
- Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50 and will be kept open until 9.00.  The register for the second session will be taken at:
1.00  for Reception
1.15 for Years 1, 2, 3 and 4
1.30 for Years 5 and 6

### 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on **01305 771289.**

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.

### 4.3 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. Copies of medical and dental appointments letters must be taken to the school office.

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 pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

### 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

### 4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may raise it as a safeguarding concern or contact the police
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

### 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. Parents/carers will be informed of their child's attendance by:

- Receiving a half termly attendance figure for their child
- Annually at the end of the school year as part of their child's written end of year report
- Discussion with the class teacher at the autumn term and spring term parent's evenings
- Being notified via monitoring letter for any attendance causing concern

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

In agreement with other local schools, the Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time. However, the Headteacher can use their discretion regarding leave of absence when taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any requests for leave of absence should be made via the school office before the leave is taken and an absence request form must be completed. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- 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

## 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.  If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:
- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

*The school promotes and rewards good attendance by:*

- Monthly class attendance challenge.  The winning class receives a certificate, trophy and a shared prize to enjoy as a class.
- Monthly attendance is celebrated on the school website.
- At the end of each term, children with 100% attendance for the term will be awarded a bronze, silver and gold badge for 100% attendance.
- Termly attendance tombola for children to win a prize for having attendance of 97% or more for the term.
- For those children who require support on an individual basis, a bespoke reward system is in place.
- Headteacher email sent to parents/carers and children to say well done for improved attendance following a monitoring period.
- The school has a holistic approach to attendance and will involve outside agencies, the school Emotional Health and Family Liaison and the school Inclusion Lead to support children and families to improve attendance.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

The school monitors attendance every month and follows the procedures in Appendix 2 - Stay Green and Make Every School Day Count and Appendix 3 – Responsibilities and attendance levels

- Half termly monitoring letters are sent for children with attendance below 95%
- The attendance is reviewed after a monitoring period. If there has been no improvement in attendance, the parent/carer of the child are invited into school for an attendance meeting.
- Following the meeting and a further monitoring period, if attendance continues to decline, the school will seek involvement from the Local Authority Attendance Team.

## 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### 7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- 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

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, 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

### 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance.  At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

**Appendix 1: attendance codes**

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|------|------------|----------|
| **/** | Present (am) | Pupil is present at morning registration |
| **\** | Present (pm) | Pupil is present at afternoon registration |
| **L** | Late arrival | Pupil arrives late before register has closed |
| **B** | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school |
| **D** | Dual registered | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| **J** | Interview | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment |
| **P** | Sporting activity | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| **V** | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school |
| **W** | Work experience | Pupil is on a work experience placement |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|------|------------|----------|
| **Authorised absence** | | |
| **C** | Authorised leave of absence | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| **E** | Excluded | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made |
| **H** | Authorised holiday | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **I** | Illness | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness |
| **M** | Medical/dental appointment | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment |
| **R** | Religious observance | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance |
| **S** | Study leave | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations |
| **T** | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school |
| **Unauthorised absence** | | |
| **G** | Unauthorised holiday | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school |
| **N** | Reason not provided | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| **O** | Unauthorised absence | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence |
| **U** | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed |

| Code | Definition | Scenario |
|---|---|---|
| **X** | Not required to be in school | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend |
| **Y** | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| **Z** | Pupil not on admission register | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school |
| **#** | Planned school closure | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day |

**Appendix 2:** *Stay Green and Make Every School Day Count*

# Stay Green and Make Every School Day Count

| 100% to 97%<br>**GREEN**<br>**Expectation for ALL Children** | → | **We will celebrate Good Attendance and Punctuality throughout the School with your child.**<br>• Expected attendance for ALL children<br>• 100% termly attendance badges awarded<br>• Termly tombola for children with 97%+ |
|---|---|---|
| 97% to 95%<br>**AMBER** | → | **We are concerned about your child's attendance.**<br>• Your child's teacher will talk to you about any absences from school.<br>• Involvement of the school Emotional Health & Family Liaison Lead.<br>• Medical evidence for all appointments<br>• We will be monitoring your child's individual attendance closely and you will be notified of this by letter. |
| Below 95%<br>**RED** | → | **We are seriously concerned about your child's attendance.**<br>• We will contact you regularly to discuss any difficulties you are having.<br>• You may be invited into school for an attendance meeting with the Assistant Headteacher<br>• The school will involve Dorset Council.<br>• If you do not engage with us or attendance does not improve, you may receive a Penalty Notice Warning Letter. |

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(Figures below are calculated over a school year)

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**Appendix 3: Responsibilities at Attendance Levels**

| 100% - 97% | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** | **By Who** | **Frequency** |
| Class Monthly Challenges | Designated Senior Lead/Class Teachers | Monthly |
| 100% badges | Headteacher | Termly |
| 97%+ tombola | Headteacher | Termly |
| Promoting good school attendance | All staff | Daily |
| Attendance letter 1 – whole school attendance expectations | School Office | Annually |
| Monitor lates and take appropriate action | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Fortnightly |

| 97% - 95% | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** | **By Who** | **Frequency** |
| Attendance Monitoring | Designated Senior Lead/Emotional Health & Family Liaison Lead/School Office | Half termly |
| Attendance Letter 2 Sent | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Half termly |
| Monitor lates and take appropriate action | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Fortnightly |

| 95% - 90% | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** | **By Who** | **Frequency** |
| Attendance letter 4 sent | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Half termly |
| Meeting to discuss attendance concerns | Assistant Headteacher | Half termly |
| Medical evidence to be provided for each absence | Parent/Carer | Each absence |
| Monitor lates and take appropriate action | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Fortnightly |

| 89.99% and below | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** | **By Who** | **Frequency** |
| Attendance letter 5 sent - Inclusion Panel | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Termly |
| Inclusion Panel meeting | Assistant Headteacher/Parent or Carer/Chesil Inclusion Lead | Termly |
| Team around the Family meeting or other appropriate meetings | Emotional Health & Family Liaison Lead/Chesil Early Help | Throughout the academic year |
| Monitor lates and take appropriate action | Designated Senior Lead/School Office | Fortnightly |
| Fixed Penalty Warnings | Dorset Council | Throughout the year |

| Failed to pay Fixed Penalty Notice | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Action** | **By Who** | **Frequency** |
| Court Action | Dorset Council | Throughout the academic year |