

Curnow School



**Curnow**School

## Attendance strategy

To be read in conjunction with the Special Partnership Trust Attendance Policy

2024-2025

**Approved by: Sam  
Murray/Helen Jones**

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### 1. Aims

#### Our School

At Curnow School we are committed to and passionate about the learning and progress of our pupils. Staff and governors have high aspirations for our children and young people through a broad and varied curriculum; highly structured; differentiated and personalised learning programmes. We provide a specialist; high quality and relevant education for young people aged 3-19 who have moderate to complex learning difficulties. This focuses on individual, personal and academic achievement-setting high expectations for all.

As a school we are also committed to celebrating all achievements and providing a wide range of rich, meaningful and varied opportunities- preparing our pupils well for adulthood and life beyond school. We aim to foster a love of learning, regardless of need, developing independence through inclusive and accessible learning.

Curnow is a maintained special school for children aged 3 – 19 years. There are currently 94 pupils/students on role (September 2022). All children and young people (CYP) who attend Curnow will have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) in place, which indicates a Statement of Educational Needs. All children and young people will have identified needs in the area of ‘Cognition and Learning’ and may be described as having severe/profound and multiple or complex learning difficulties. In addition to a learning need, pupils may also have other associated needs in:

- Communication and Interaction Difficulties, (autistic spectrum disorders, speech and language difficulties)
- Physical Needs (e.g. mobility needs, physical disabilities, wheelchair users).
- Sensory or Medical Needs, (visual, hearing impairment, epilepsy, life limiting conditions etc.)
- Emotional/Social Needs (including mental health needs)

#### Our Trust

Curnow School is part of the Special Partnership Trust, an ambitious and inspiring collaboration of specialist provision in Cornwall, with a focus on excellence in learning for everyone. We are committed to ensure that every child, irrespective

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of need or location gets the best learning opportunities possible. We believe in providing challenge and support in equal measure to our pupils, nurturing the talents and skills of all learners.

## Commitment to attendance

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 so pupils have the support in place to attend school.

At Curnow we recognise that evidence shows that securing excellent attendance at school is key to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people. We have the highest expectations for all our students. Poor attendance leaves students vulnerable to falling behind, creating gaps in their learning, and diminishing their self-confidence. Additionally there will be some pupils whose attendance is affected by physical and mental health difficulties. Whilst we will always work with families to maximise attendance we recognize that this is not always possible. In this instance a comprehensive home learning package will be agreed with the families where appropriate and where the student is well enough to engage.

### The Leaders of the school:

- have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school
- communicate these expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to pupils
- set expectations about attendance from the outset – from Nursery onwards
- explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve
- listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that they can act accordingly
- challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed
- have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents
- ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately
- systematically analyse attendance information so that they can see patterns and trends
- use this analysis to target their actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school
- understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an interrelationship between attendance and the quality of the school's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity
- set ambitious targets regarding attendance (**at least** in line with National averages)
- see the process of securing good attendance for all pupils as an ongoing process, never something that is 'finished'

## 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.
- [Working together to improve school attendance - Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities August 2024](#)

### 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
- 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

**Link Governor for attendance: Helen Jones**

#### 3.2 The Headteacher: Rob Armstrong

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
- Making referrals to the Education Welfare Officer as required.

#### 3.3 The Attendance Lead: Sam Murray

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 (bi-weekly report to Safeguarding meeting, half termly meeting with EWO, termly report for Head Teachers report, termly report to parents (unless needed outside of this timeframe), annually reported at EHCP review meeting).

- 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
- Working with teachers to enable them to best support families with attendance

The Attendance Lead is Sam Murray and can be contacted via 01209 215432

### **3.4 The attendance administrator: Lyndsey Barradas**

The school attendance administrator is responsible for:

- Producing reports – HT Report/SG PA report/Termly attendance reports/EWO attendance data
- Collate daily attendance information- registers – daily SLT report
- Produces attendance reports/ individual attendance reports as necessary

### **3.5 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 by 9:20/9.40am every day that the students attend. They are also responsible for raising any concerns regarding attendance to the Senior Leadership team immediately. Teachers will work alongside the Attendance Lead (Sam Murray) in communicating with and supporting families with attendance related matters.

### **3.6 All staff**

To promote excellent attendance by pupils and provide opportunities to celebrate good attendance. To raise concerns with the Attendance Lead where necessary

### **3.7 School admin staff**

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance, Sam Murray in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### **3.8 Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- 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 one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Refrain for taking term time holidays- except in 'exceptional circumstances'.

### **3.9 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

## **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 the first session of each school day and once during the second session. 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 9:00am on the Upper School site and 9.15am on the Lower School site on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:15/9.30 am and will be kept open until 9:30/9.45 am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:15pm.

## **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 staff (see also section 7).

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 (via the school office number 01209 215432).

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 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

Any repeated lateness will result in a discussion with the Attendance Lead in the first instance in order to support. The designated leader for attendance may request a meeting if punctuality continues to be an issue.

#### **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 contact external services such as Social Care and/ or 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 via termly written reports communicated via the parent progress meetings and at annual review meetings. Where there are immediate concerns outside of this timescale the parents/ carers will be informed verbally in the first instance, before receiving a letter addressing concerns. Termly letters will be sent to all parents to re-iterate the impact of school attendance and to explain the fines procedure.

### **5. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

#### **5.1 Approval for term-time absence**

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.

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

The school recognises the additional pressures placed upon families with a child with disabilities and/or special educational needs and the need for respite. We also recognise that the additional complexities, for example requiring adapted accommodation, involved in taking such children on holiday can make them prohibitive. In many cases, the only option is to take the holiday when accommodation is available 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 in regards to the safety of any pupil whose parent has requested an exceptional circumstance this will be discussed with the CEO/LADO/Social Care/MARU with immediate effect. In accordance to established protocols, any Child in Care will not be authorised for any leave of absence from the school without discussing this with their allocated social worker.

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

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Family event that cannot be rescheduled out of school time such as a funeral or close family wedding
- 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. The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence, the fine amount will be: £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days. If not paid within 21 days, the fine will increase to £160 per parent, per child, payable between the 22nd and 28th day. 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 your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid after this but within 28 days.

If your child is further absent from school without authorisation within any 3-year period, you will be committing a further offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices for a second offence are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £160, payable within 28 days.

Importantly, fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may also result in legal action. If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Absence not authorised by the school may also result in a prosecution in the Magistrates’ Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Again, Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Money raised from fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.



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

As a Special School for students with complex needs, Curnow recognises that the students and their families may not have full autonomy over their attendance. Therefore, attendance rewards and sanctions for individual students are not appropriate. The following strategies are employed at Curnow:

- we have high expectations for every pupil's attendance at school
- we have a team that is passionate about high expectations for all learners
- we provide a varied and engaging curriculum so that all students enjoy being at school
- we give students a purpose to be in school each day
- we provide a safe and welcoming environment for all in the school community
- we make sure students know who they can communicate with if they have any worries or concerns
- we communicate expectations clearly, strongly and consistently to parents and to pupils
- we set expectations about attendance from the outset – from EYFS transition onwards
- we explain to parents and pupils why good attendance is important and how it helps pupils to achieve
- we listen to parents carefully to find out why their children are not attending well enough so that we can act accordingly. We provide ongoing support from our Home School Liaison
- we challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed
- we have the right people in place to have these conversations with parents
- we ensure that attendance is always recorded accurately
- we systematically analyse attendance information so that we can see patterns and trends
- we use this analysis to target actions, both for individuals and at a whole-school level
- we make sure that attendance is 'everyone's business' in school
- we engage in, and welcome, further reading, resources, research and 'good ideas' about continually improving attendance.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

Curnow school will:

Monitor attendance and absence data biweekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level PA attendance (below 90%) will be monitored every two weeks within our safeguarding monitoring meetings with agreed actions led by attendance lead.

- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children/individuals whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Discuss attendance concerns as part of regular Safeguarding team meetings and identify actions.

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.

## 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 yearly by Sam Murray, Attendance Lead. 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
- Special Partnership Trust Attendance Policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Full name	Description
The student is counted as present.		
/ or \	Present am or pm	Present in school during registration.
L	Late	Late arrival before the register has closed
The student is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Activity.		
B	Educated off Site	The student is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school.
K	Education provision provided by LA	Education provision arranged by a local authority, rather than the school
P	Sporting Activity (Approved)	Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	Educational trip	A residential trip organised by the school or a supervised strictly educational trip arranged by an approved organisation.
W	Work Experience	A student in the final two years of compulsory education is attending work experience.
The student is counted as absent, authorised.		
C1	Other Authorised Absence	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
J1	Interview	Leave of absence to attend an interview for employment or admission into another educational institution
C2	Other Authorised Absence	Pupils on part-time timetables

E	Excluded	If a student is excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked E, for up to the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period (referred to as 'suspensions' by the DfE from Autumn 2021) or permanent exclusion.
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	The student is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours.
R	Religious Observance	The student is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body.
S	Study Leave	Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils for public exams. Students should still be able to come into school to revise.
T	Traveller Absence	Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
I	Illness	This illness code can be used for any form of illness, if you don't want to distinguish Covid-19 illness.
I01	Illness	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for students absent due to non-coronavirus related illness (unless the truthfulness of the claim is in question). This code should not be used for medical or dental appointments.
I02	Confirmed case of Covid-19	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for pupils who have a confirmed case of coronavirus.
<b>The student is counted as absent, unauthorised.</b>		
G	Family Holiday (Not Agreed)	The Holiday was not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher.
N	No Reason	The reason for the absence has not been provided. If no reason for an absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time, it should be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised Absence	If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.
U	Late (After Register Closes)	Schools should keep registers open for a reasonable amount of time, after which the student should be marked with a U.

These codes are not counted so will not affect attendance figures.

D	Dual Registration	The student is registered at another school and attends it during this lesson e.g. students at a pupil referral unit. Schools should only record attendance and absences for sessions the pupil is scheduled to attend at their school.
X	Non-statutory school age absence	Sessions non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend. This code should only be used for early years students who have not yet passed the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday.
Y1	Unable to attend	Absence due to transport normally provided not being available.
Y2	Unable to attend	Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend	Part of school closed.
Y4	Unable to attend	Unexpected whole school closure (different from # for planned closures).
Y5	Unable to attend	Pupils in the criminal justice system.
Y6	Unable to attend	Absence due to public health guidance or law.
Y7	Unable to attend	Any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil Not On Roll	This code can be used when setting up registers in advance of pupils joining. Schools must take attendance for pupils from the first day the student should be attending the school.
#	School Closed To Pupils	This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as if the school is used as a polling station.