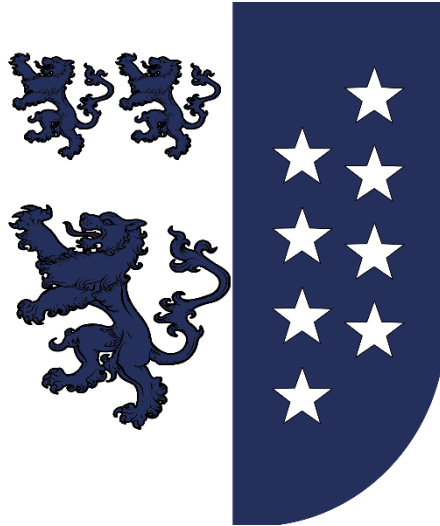




Countess Gytha Primary School

Attendance Policy

Incorporating the statutory guidance found within Working Together to Improve School Attendance

October 2026 (DRAFT)

Date of Policy	October 2026
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Policy last reviewed by	DRAFT – TO BE AGREED October 2026 Local Governing Body

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1. Aims

Countess Gytha Primary School is committed to providing an environment where all pupils can access their right to a full-time education. We recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on children's educational achievement, wellbeing, safeguarding and future life chances. We are committed to working in partnership with pupils, families, the Local Authority and other agencies to promote excellent attendance and remove barriers to learning.

We believe that by improving attendance we better support the wider school culture, including the importance we place on the partnership between families and the school staff community.

We aim to achieve this by:

- Promoting good attendance to achieve an overall attendance level of >95%
- 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
- Reducing absence, including persistent absence (90% attendance or below) and severe absence (50% attendance or below)
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Rationale

At Countess Gytha, we believe that good attendance is a crucial part of ensuring that children can achieve their potential and understand the importance of daily routine for each step of their educational journey.

The school recognises that attendance can in some cases be a safeguarding matter. Absence from education can be an indicator of abuse, neglect, exploitation, mental health needs, family difficulties, child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, county lines involvement or other safeguarding concerns. Where attendance concerns arise, appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed alongside attendance intervention and support.

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is legitimate. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/guardian.

Our definition of 'Good Attendance' is 95% or above.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/guardians and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/guardians have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents/guardians as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

All children may sometimes be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/guardians and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents/guardians), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Attendance is recorded in sessions, with 2 sessions per day.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school with good reason such as illness or other legitimate cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreed authorised "leave" has been given. This includes:

- **Parents/guardians keeping children off school unnecessarily**
- **Truancy before or during the school day**
- **Absences which have never been properly explained**
- **Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark**
- **Holidays in term time for which leave of absence has not been granted**

A full list of attendance codes can be found in Appendix 1.

Parents/guardians are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This may involve further help by referral to other professionals or outside agencies. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Safeguarding Service (ESS) for the intervention of the Attendance Liaison Manager (ALM). The ALM will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, the ALM can use court proceedings to prosecute parents/guardians or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child

3. 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:

- Department for Education "Working Together to Improve School Attendance" (updated July 2026)
- Department for Education "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (current version)
- Department for Education "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2023 and subsequent updates)
- "Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools"
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 1996
- Education and Inspections Act 2006

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 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

4.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead will work together to ensure attendance concerns are considered within safeguarding assessments and that attendance information informs early help planning where appropriate.
- 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

4.3 The Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance

The designated leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Meeting regularly with the ALM
- Attending 'triage' meetings concerning attendance
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Arranging targeted intervention and support to children and families

The designated leader responsible for attendance is Mr David Gordon (Head Teacher).

4.4 The Attendance Liaison Manager

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and recording attendance for all students.
- Attending regular 'Triage' Meetings concerning attendance.
- Follow-up absences communicating with parents/guardians to obtain reasons for absence etc.
- Liaise as required with Education Safeguarding Service regarding Penalty Notices, Elective Home Education, Children Missing Education etc.

4.5 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance daily for each morning and afternoon session using the correct codes
- Recording any lateness of pupils to their lessons and recording the number of minutes late via the school system.
- Submitting attendance information via the school system at the beginning of each registration period
- Monitoring their class's attendance and being the first point of contact with parents for any issues around attendance

- Working with the Head Teacher or Designated Leader to resolve any attendance issues concerning their class.

4.6 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls regarding absences on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Pass on messages from parents regarding absence to the class teachers / Designated Leader if necessary

4.7 Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before 08:30 on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence) advising 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

4.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

Attend every lesson and activity on time.

5. Recording Attendance and Procedures

5.1 Procedures

The school will adopt a "support first" approach. Attendance difficulties are often complex and may arise from barriers including physical health needs, mental health concerns, SEND, caring responsibilities, bereavement, housing difficulties or other family circumstances. The school will seek to understand and remove barriers to attendance in partnership with families before considering formal legal interventions wherever appropriate.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Attendance Registers are required by law to be taken twice a day, once at the commencement of the morning session and once at the commencement of the afternoon session.
- Registers close 10 minutes after the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- Procedures for the marking of registers and associated administration along with the agreed rewards and sanctions are published and shared with staff.
- The Head Teacher or Designated Leader monitors attendance records and makes appropriate referrals.
- The School Office will contact parents/guardians when a child is absent, and the school has not been informed.
- Parents/guardians must provide a reasonable explanation for all absences, or they will be coded as unauthorised.

- Refer the family to the Attendance Liaison Manager (ALM) with the Education Safeguarding Service (ESS).
- Fortnightly meetings are held by the Head Teacher and class teachers to review and discuss attendance concerns and any subsequent actions to be taken. This will always include children who are persistently absent (whose attendance 90% or less), severely absent (whose attendance is 50% or less) or those with 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a 12-week period.
- Holiday during school time will not be granted unless it is due to exceptional circumstances. In line with DfE statutory guidance, the school does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence also cannot be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

i) Missing Child / Truancy

If a child does not arrive at school and a parent/guardian does not call in on their behalf, parents/guardians will be contacted. If a parent/guardian responds to this message stating that the child left for school, but has not arrived, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to contact the police. However, the school will support initial investigations as necessary (for example speaking to any student in school about student's whereabouts).

If a young person is found to be absent from a lesson, the class teacher should alert all staff. A thorough search of site will be made for the young person. If the child is not found on school site, it will be established by the Head Teacher when the student was last seen. The police and parents/guardians will then be contacted and a local area search established. The School Office should remain in constant contact with the parent/guardian to try to ascertain locally known areas etc.

ii) Holidays during term time

Countess Gytha School follows the DfE and Local Authority guidelines with reference to holidays during term time.

Government guidance sets out that holidays during school time can no longer be authorised by schools, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Countess Gytha School will therefore not authorise any absence during term time unless the application meets the exceptional circumstances criteria set out below. Please be aware that simply meeting these criteria does not automatically mean an authorisation will be granted for either the full or any part of the term time holiday request.

- One or more parents is a member of the armed forces and due to their role, cannot take their holiday during school holiday times. Evidence from the serving family member's Commanding Officer must be provided to support this.
- One or more parents is a member of the police, fire or medical NHS staff who has restricted leave due to their job and evidence can be provided to support this.

- Death of a parent, grandparent, stepparent, sibling, or step-sibling who is living overseas and whose funeral will be overseas.
- Terminal illness of immediate family member (this includes parent, step- parent and siblings who have less than 3 months anticipated left to live).

If an unauthorised absence holiday is taken during term time the school and the school deem that further support is no longer appropriate, it can request a penalty notice be served on parents following 10 or more unauthorised sessions (5 days total) occurring in a period of 10 weeks.

5.2 Warning Penalty Notices and Penalty Notices

Information on penalty notices can be found in the Somerset Council Penalty Procedure Leaflet which is copied into Appendix 2 below.

The school follows the National Framework for Penalty Notices introduced in August 2024.

Penalty Notices may be considered where there have been 10 sessions (normally equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school-week period.

Before requesting a Penalty Notice, the school will consider:

- Whether support has been provided.
- Whether further support is appropriate.
- Whether another intervention would be more effective.

Separately, Penalty Notices may also be considered for unauthorised term-time leave.

The level of any Penalty Notice will be determined in accordance with the national framework and local authority procedures.

5.3 Child Missing in Education

The school recognises that children missing education are at increased risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, forced marriage, radicalisation and other safeguarding concerns. Any unexplained absence or failure to attend after admission will be investigated promptly in line with safeguarding procedures.

If a young person leaves Countess Gytha School to join another school or receive home education the parents/guardians must inform the school in writing.

If a student leaves during the academic year and staff are not informed of their next school or, if Countess Gytha School is unable to establish that the young person has started, the child will remain on roll at Countess Gytha until it is established where he/she is receiving education and a Child Missing Education Referral will be completed and submitted to the Education Safeguarding Service

Once a new school placement has been confirmed and the student has started, a CTF (Common Transfer File) will be sent electronically, and paper files will be sent via recorded delivery to the new school. The child will remain on school roll until the Local Authority notifies otherwise.

5.4 Reporting Absence

Parents/Guardians should report unplanned absences and a brief reason for the absence before 8:30 am.

- As part of our Safeguarding Procedures parents/guardians reporting periods of absence via voicemail/phone may receive a call from the School Office to confirm the identity of the caller. Parents/Guardians may also be asked to follow up in their call, in writing either by an email or a letter from a parent/guardian on their child's return.
- It is vital that parents/guardians notify the school each day their child is unwell.
- Absences will be marked as unauthorised until the Head Teacher is satisfied that parents/guardians have provided a valid explanation or evidence to authorise the absence.
- Medical absences: For medical absences over five days, the school requires medical evidence to continue to authorise the absence this can take the form of for example a copy of a prescription, doctor's appointment, or consultant's letter.
- For planned absences from school or lessons, such as dental/medical appointments or other legitimate reasons, parents/guardians should provide an appointment card from the dentist/hospital etc. If a note or a card is not produced, then the absence will not be authorised.
- All absences will be marked as unauthorised if no communication from parents/guardians has been received.
- The school is required to inform the Local Authority if a student fails to attend school for 10 sessions in any 10-week period
- To request permission for a child to be absent for any other reason than illness or medical, the term-time leave form is available from the school office.

6. Strategies for Rewarding and Improving Attendance

Countess Gytha will look to maintaining and improving attendance for all students by:

6.1 Rewarding Attendance

Countess Gytha rewards good attendance but also recognises that rewarding attendance by, for example, giving certificates for 100% attendance discriminates against those who are striving to attend school but may have been ill. We therefore will recognise good attendance or improvement in attendance in our Celebration Assemblies on Friday mornings.

6.2 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence 4-weekly, 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 county and national averages and share this with the governing board.

6.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify children 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

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Use attendance data to facilitate discussions with children 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

6.4 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 identify children who are likely to need support at the beginning of the year so timely interventions can be made.
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Be mindful of the needs of particular students or cohorts and use support within its Pastoral Care System to provide early help and intervention *e.g. the graduated response for students with SEMH*
- Use an attendance graduated response approach as threshold points for attendance are reached.
 - Letter 1 – pattern or early concern regarding procedures or attendance
 - Letter 2 – continued concern where student is in danger of Persistent Absence
 - Letter 3 – meeting with Head Teacher to discuss barriers and support where Persistent Absence threshold has been breached or is about to be breached.
 - Meeting with Head Teacher and other parties to arrange formal support *e.g.* family intervention
 - Enforcement Procedures *e.g.* through statutory intervention where all other avenues have been exhausted or support is not working or has not been engaged with.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children 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

6.5 Vulnerable Groups

The school will pay particular attention to attendance of:

- Children with SEND
- Children with a social worker
- Previously looked after children
- Young carers
- Children experiencing mental health difficulties
- Children known to safeguarding services
- Pupils subject to Child in Need or Child Protection Plans

Attendance information will be considered as part of wider safeguarding and welfare assessments.

7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

/ Present (AM) Present In for whole session ...

\ Present (PM) Present In for whole session ...

B Attending any other Approved Educational Activity Approved Educational Activity Out for whole session ...

C Other authorised exceptional circumstances Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

C1 Leave of absence - regulated performance or employment abroad Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

C2 Leave of absence - part-time timetable Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

D Dual registration Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

E Suspended or excluded without alternative provision Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

F Extended family holiday (agreed) Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

G Family holiday (not agreed) Unauthorised Absence Out for whole session ...

H Family holiday (agreed) Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

I Illness Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

J Interview Approved Educational Activity Out for whole session ...

J1 Leave of absence - Interview for employment or transfer Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

K Attending alternative provision arranged by the LA Approved Educational Activity Out for whole session ...

L Late (before registers closed) Present Late for session ...

M Medical/Dental appointment Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

N No reason yet provided for absence Unauthorised Absence Out for whole session ...

O Absent in other or unknown circumstances Unauthorised Absence Out for whole session ...

P Participating in a sporting activity Approved Educational Activity Out for whole session ...

Q Unable to attend - lack of access arrangement Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

R Religious observance Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

S Study leave for public examination Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

T Travelling with parent for occupational purposes Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

U Late (after registers closed) Unauthorised Absence Late for session ...

V Attending an educational visit or trip Approved Educational Activity Out for whole session ...

W Attending work experience Approved Educational Activity Out for whole session ...

X Not required to attend - non-compulsory school age pupil Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances Attendance not required Out for whole session -

Y1 Unable to attend - normal transport not available Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y2 Unable to attend - widespread travel disruption Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y3 Unable to attend - unavoidable partial closure Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y4 Unable to attend - unavoidable full closure Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y5 Unable to attend - criminal justice detention Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y6 Unable to attend - public health Guidance/Law Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Y7 Unable to attend - unavoidable other than Y1-Y6 Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

Z Pupil not on roll Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

7 Illness due to Covid 19 Authorised Absence Out for whole session ...

8 Self-isolating due to Covid 19 Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

9 Shielding due to Covid 19 Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

- All should attend / No mark recorded No mark No mark for session ...

Planned whole school closure Attendance not required Out for whole session ...

@ Do Not Use Unauthorised Absence Late for session ...

Appendix 2: Somerset Council Penalty Notice Information for Parents

Supporting Good School Attendance Information about Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence from School  Following the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised absences recorded after 19 August 2024. This information refers to penalty notices that are considered for both irregular attendance and unauthorised term-time leave.	
What is a Penalty Notice? A penalty notice is a fixed penalty fine issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution in relation to unauthorised school absence.	Who can be a Penalty be Issued to? Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent or carer of each child whose unauthorised absence meets the national threshold. For example, in a family with two parents and three children taking unauthorised term-time leave, each parent could receive a penalty notice for each child resulting in six penalty notices being issued.
The National Threshold Schools are required to consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate when a child reaches 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. Absences do not have to be consecutive and can be a combination of any unauthorised absence codes (G, O, N or U). The rolling ten school week period can span terms, school years and schools.	
The First Offence The first time a parent is issued with a penalty notice in relation to a child's absence, they will be able to pay the reduced amount of £80 if they pay within 21 days. After 21 days, the full amount of £160 is payable within 28 days.	The Second Offence If a parent is issued with a second penalty notice within three years the amount payable will be £160 within 28 days. The reduced amount will not be available.
Further Offences A parent cannot be issued with more than two penalty notices in relation to each child within a three-year period. Where this threshold is met and further offences occur, the Local Authority will consider other measures to address attendance concerns. This may include prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and the parent having a criminal record. In rare cases, parents may receive a custodial sentence. If convicted, the offence will also show on any future DBS checks.	
Appealing a Penalty Notice There is no statutory right for parents to appeal penalty notices for unauthorised school absence. If a parent believes a penalty notice has been issued in error, they should contact their child's school as quickly as possible. If an error has been made, the school may request a withdrawal.	Not Paying a Penalty Notice If a penalty notice is not paid within the payment period, Somerset Council may prosecute the parent for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.
The Law Penalty notices are issued in line with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 when a parent has failed to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Penalty notices can only be issued when: ✓ a child's absence meets the national threshold ✓ issuing a penalty notice is compliant with the Code of Conduct	The Code of Conduct Every local authority has a Penalty Notice Code of Conduct that outlines how, and when, it will issue penalty notices relating to unauthorised school absence. Somerset's Code of Conduct is available online and describes the circumstances when issuing a penalty notice is appropriate. Penalty notices will only be issued in line with the Code of Conduct.
Useful Links → Working Together to Improve School Attendance → Somerset Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct → The Education Act 1996 	