



“Inspiring all young people to achieve a brighter future...”

## Managing pupil attendance

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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<b>1</b>	September 2022	Updated in light of working together to improve attendance	K Ingham
<b>2</b>	March 2023	Updated following discussion with LA attendance officer. Names of leads included.	K.Ingham
<b>3</b>	September 2024	New Attendance codes added to Appendix A  Whole policy review addressing principles underpinning the <i>Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024</i> strategy	D King
<b>4</b>	April	Section added about escalation if child cannot be contacted.	D King
<b>5</b>	Sept 2025	KCSIE 2025 Updates added	D King
<b>6</b>	February 2026	Attendance expectations – new section re: Aspire & achieve Centre.	D King

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## 1. Purpose

This policy outlines the strategies and procedures Cloughside College employs to support and promote high attendance levels, aligning with the UK Government's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* strategy. Recognising the link between regular attendance, academic achievement, and personal development, Cloughside College is committed to providing a supportive, inclusive environment where all students can maximise their potential, even within the constraints of their mental health needs. This policy has been reviewed within the context of the *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* strategy and aims to address all the underlying principles of that strategy.

### Parent/Carer Summary

Cloughside College expects every student to attend for as much time as their health condition allows. Attendance is essential for recovery, wellbeing, and educational progress. We work closely with families, health professionals, and local authorities to support this. Parents and carers can expect:

- Clear communication from the school about attendance.
- Bespoke support plans to help overcome barriers to attendance.
- Recognition of their child's attendance achievements.

If you have concerns about your child's attendance, please contact the Unit Lead or Attendance Champion.

## 2. Aims

- To ensure all students attend school regularly and on time.
- To identify and address barriers to attendance as early as possible.
- To provide a positive, supportive approach to improving attendance for all students, including those facing personal or social challenges.
- To comply with legal requirements and maintain accurate attendance records.
- To promote a school culture where good attendance is valued and rewarded.

The College recognises that attendance is primarily driven by students' mental health and clinical presentation. It would therefore be inappropriate to set numerical attendance targets for the whole school. Instead, attendance is monitored against individual health and recovery baselines, with progress considered in terms of engagement and re-engagement rather than percentages alone.

For each learner, attendance expectations are agreed through ward reviews, CPAs, or Education Planning Meetings, ensuring they are clinically informed, realistic, and recovery focused. Success is measured through small, incremental improvements such as attending part-sessions, re-establishing routine, or extending time in class. This approach is consistent with *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* (DfE, 2024), which requires schools to recognise and respond to the individual barriers that prevent children from attending.

## 3. Context

Cloughside College is a maintained special school located at a CAMHS hospital setting with tier 4 provision which provides an education for young people who are unable to attend their own school due to medical needs. In the majority of cases Cloughside is the subsidiary place of education and students will be dual registered.

The majority of pupils receiving their education through our provision are not attending their own schools because they are in patients in hospital being detained under the mental health act or are undergoing voluntary assessment. Some students attend the College through 'day service.' Students enter day service through tier 3 CAMHS referral. Day service is available for a maximum of 4 days per week. Admissions to day service and the number of days attended is determined by CAMHS.

For some of our student's prior experience of education has been limited or interrupted and they are provided with the chance to reengage in education. Whatever the prior education experience or needs of our students our priority is to support recovery and to prepare young people for the next steps in their education or employment. Where a student is already in education the aim is to provide continuity, maintain strong links with the home school or college and ensure a seamless transition.

It is our policy that pupils should attend for as much time as possible within the constraints of their health condition/s. All students taught at Cloughside, will have realistic yet challenging target set on their Individual needs. Health staff play a key part in setting attendance targets through ward review and discussions with the medical team on individual cases.

The time the school day begins depends on which unit the students are on due to ward routines, presentation and medication requirements. The school day runs between 9 am and 3.15 p.m. Registers are taken within each session. Due to the hospital setting students may have different start times in line with therapies and ward routines. Consideration will always be given to the presenting needs of the pupil regarding the register coding at Cloughside. We support students to receive as much education as they can using a pupil focused bespoke approach.

Regular attendance at college is a crucial part of recovery as it provides structure and routine. It also ensures that students do not fall behind and reduces stress when they return to their home school.

Key stage three and four students will receive a full timetable, unless there is a clinical reason for not doing so. Key stage five students will be given a timetable that reflects their community curriculum, with the option of topping up their studies with enrichment activities, if they so desire. Those students who are NEET will receive a timetable that allows them to fulfil their academic goals whilst at Cloughside. This may be starting a new qualification pathway and/or improving existing grades.

#### **4. Strategic attendance leads**

If parents or carers wish to discuss attendance, they can contact the Unit leads

Prestwich site: Laura Jepson

[jepson.l@cloughside.co.uk](mailto:jepson.l@cloughside.co.uk)

0161 271 0108

Bury Site: Paul O'Reilly

oreilly.p@cloughside.co.uk

0161 716 1145

Alternatively, parents can contact the Deputy Head Teacher and attendance champion:

David King

king.d@cloughsie.co.uk

0161 772 4625

## 5. Bury's School Attendance, Exclusions and Community Learning Team

Additionally, Cloughside College works closely with Bury's School Attendance, Exclusions and Community Learning Team. Our main contact here is:

Natalie Burke (Senior School Attendance and Exclusions Officer)

N.Burke@bury.gov.uk

0161 253 5192

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

### School Leadership (Head, Attendance Champion, Unit Leads, Senior teachers):

- Maintain accurate and up-to-date records of student attendance using the updated registration codes 2024.
- Monitor attendance on a daily basis and identify any patterns of absence.
- Analyse attendance data to identify patterns and trends and put appropriate intervention in place.
- To regularly liaise with Bury's School Attendance, Exclusions and Community Learning Team, to ensure accurate coding and compliance to the *Working Together* strategy.
- Provide regular updates to parents and carers regarding student attendance.
- Support students who are struggling with attendance by offering tailored interventions and assistance.
- Ensure that attendance is a focus during school evaluations.
- Review reasons for absence using information provided by medical staff including the handover document.
- Set up education planning meetings if necessary to ensure appropriate plans are in place to address attendance issues.
- Agree personalised timetables through ward review and weekly review of attendance.
- Organise intervention with young people who are not attending school regularly.
- Discuss attendance matters at ward review and CPA.
- Discuss attendance concerns raised by administration team with nurse team leader.

- Attend the ward at the start of the day to promote attendance.

### **Classroom Teachers/HLTAs:**

- Visit the ward to ensure that young people attend college regularly.
- Encourage students to value good attendance and punctuality as part of their overall education.
- Take accurate attendance within 10 minutes of the start of each lesson.
- Report any concerns regarding attendance or punctuality to school leadership.
- Provide education on the ward as necessary and provide missed work to young people who are unable to attend.
- Mark registers with the codes:

N - reason not provided add a comment as to the reason for absence

M - in an appointment with one of the medical staff

/ - present

L - present but arrived late

### **Administration team**

- Check the handover to ascertain reasons for absence
- Discuss reasons for absence with unit leader where there are concerns about non-attendance
- Amend marks appropriately.
- Maintain the admissions register.
- Contact parents with updates on attendance and provide a weekly attendance figure.
- Provide key teachers and unit leaders with attendance information.
- Provide information on student groups.
- Maintain effective links with the home school to obtain work and student information.
- Liaise with the Trust social worker to identify students with a CIN or CP plan.
- Provide attendance updates to home schools through the CPA process
- Contact local authorities

### **Key teacher**

Review attendance on a regular basis with each young person during directed time (8.30 -9.00 am and 3.15 to 3.45pm).

### **Parents and Carers:**

- To work with Cloughside College to ensure the best attendance outcomes for students.

### **Students:**

- Understand the importance of regular school attendance.
- Attend school on time every day.

- Actively participate in any school initiatives or rewards related to good attendance.
- Attendance data will be analysed termly and reported to governors. This will include whole-school figures, persistent and severe absence rates, and comparisons by pupil groups (e.g. SEND, Children in Care, EDNA learners). Reports will evaluate the impact of interventions and inform future planning.

## 7. Working together

The *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* strategy emphasises the shared responsibility among schools, families, and local authorities to ensure high attendance rates. Key points to include in an attendance policy are:

- 1. Early Identification and Intervention:**
  - Monitor attendance closely to identify patterns of absence early.
  - Engage with families and students promptly to address barriers to attendance.
- 2. Collaborative Approach:**
  - Foster partnerships between schools, parents, local authorities, and other agencies to tackle persistent and severe absence.
  - Ensure clear communication and shared responsibility for attendance improvement.
- 3. Attendance Culture:**
  - Promote the importance of regular attendance across the school community.
  - Reward and recognise good attendance to foster a positive attitude towards attendance.
- 4. Tailored Support:**
  - Address individual barriers to attendance, such as mental health needs, SEND, or family circumstances, through targeted interventions and personalised plans.
  - Provide support for vulnerable groups, including children in care and those with additional needs.
- 5. Data-Driven Decision Making:**
  - Use attendance data effectively to identify trends, evaluate interventions, and report progress to stakeholders.
- 6. Accountability:**
  - Clarify the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents, and external agencies.
  - Establish clear escalation procedures for addressing persistent non-attendance, including formal action if required.
- 7. Legal Compliance:**
  - Ensure policies align with statutory requirements, including accurate attendance coding and reporting.

## 8. Attendance Expectations

### Hospital-Specific Expectations

Attendance expectations reflect the hospital setting:

#### Inpatient Service

- Start times vary based on ward routines and therapies.
- Registers accommodate students' clinical commitments.
- Timetables are personalised, with Key Stage 3 and 4 students offered full timetables, whilst Key Stage 5 students engage in tailored academic and enrichment activities.

#### Day Service

- Supports outpatient students, offering education up to four days per week.
- Attendance plans are developed collaboratively between Day Service staff and Cloughside leadership.

Day Service is the outpatient arm of J17. The purpose of the Day Service is to:

1. Prevent young people in the community becoming inpatients
2. Act as a 'step down' for inpatients transitioning back to the community

Day service staff will decide which days students attend. This will be based on the needs of the learner, their community commitments and the capacity of the service.

Day Service students will be dual registered if they have a community school/college. Where patients are not in day service, they will be dual registered with their home schools.

Unit leader will liaise with Days Service staff to ascertain the best strategy to support attendance.

#### Aspire & Achieve Centre

- Parents or carers are expected to inform Cloughside College of any child's absence by 9.30am on the day of absence.
- Where a child has not arrived by that time and no notice has been given, Cloughside admin staff will attempt to contact parents or carers.
- Home schools will also be informed of any absence on the day and/or failed attempts to contact the home/child. Home schools should follow their own procedures when deciding whether a welfare visit is necessary.
- Where there is a known and ongoing safeguarding concern, Cloughside will reserve the right to undertake a welfare visit to the family home.

## 9. Supporting Good Attendance

### Early identification of barrier/s

The *Working Together* document identifies mental health as being a significant barrier to attendance. This applies to all of our learners; however, we have also identified areas where early identification of need would help us decide on a more specialist intervention in a timely manner.

- **Learners with significant psychotic symptoms** – these would be placed on the nurture pathway to enable routine building and engagement for recovery. We have made this a key area of improvement for our school improvement plan.
- **Emotionally Driven Non-Attendees (EDNA)** – these are students who are normally described as EBSA. Cloughside is leader in an MDT project to identify and target learners who are EDNA to get them into college asap.
- **Autism** – Cloughside is committed to ensuring we are an autistic friendly school and have invested in specialist CPD for our SENCO. We have made this a key area of improvement for our school improvement plan.

### **Positive Reinforcement**

- a) Attendance achievements are celebrated through certificates, awards, and end-of-term recognition.

### **Targeted Monitoring**

- If attendance falls agreed MDT target, a tiered intervention approach will be followed:
  1. **Discussion with unit lead and/or SENCO:** to identify any concerns or worries
  2. **Parental Contact:** Parents are informed of attendance concerns, if appropriate.
  3. **Discussion with MDT at ward rounds:** Tailored interventions, including occupational therapy, talking therapies, art and music therapies could be implemented or a coordinated approach to addressing worries or concerns.
  4. **Joint meeting with college representative (unit lead, attendance champion, SENCO) with student's consultant:** This would focus on the importance of attending college as part of recovery.
  5. **Formal Meetings:** Persistent issues would be discussed at CPA level leading to collaborative action plans involving parents, health professionals, and external agencies.

### **Promoting Good Attendance**

Promoting good attendance for learners within a Tier 4 CAMHS setting requires a multi-faceted, empathetic approach. The college will use the following key strategies:

- a) **Foster Positive Relationships**
  - Build trust through consistent, supportive interactions with students and families.
  - Assign a key teacher to act as a mentor or advocate.
- b) **Personalised Inductions**
  - Offer gradual reintegration plans tailored to the student's needs.
  - Use flexible timetables to ease anxiety.
- c) **Safe and Welcoming Environment**
  - Create a calm, nurturing atmosphere with safe spaces for self-regulation.
  - Implement predictable routines as much as possible to reduce uncertainty.
- d) **Address Underlying Causes**
  - Collaborate with therapists and mental health professionals to address emotional barriers.

- Provide regular check-ins to monitor and adapt support.
- e) Engage Families**
- Use open communication to involve parents/carers as partners in attendance improvement.
- f) Incentives and Recognition**
- Celebrate small attendance achievements to build confidence.
  - Use personalised rewards to motivate attendance.
- g) Curriculum Adjustments**
- Tailor lessons to be engaging and relevant, reducing academic pressure for those where this has been identified as an area of anxiety.
  - Allow for project-based or interest-led learning, where appropriate.
- h) Peer Support**
- Facilitate peer mentoring or buddy systems to reduce feelings of isolation.
  - Encourage social opportunities through group activities.
- i) Clear Attendance Policies**
- Defining expectations compassionately, with understanding.
  - Use codes and reporting sensitively to reflect the complexities of attendance issues. This will necessitate staff using comments to explain attendance.
- j) Multi-Disciplinary Collaboration**
- Use a team approach with education, health, and social care professionals.
  - Regularly review progress and adapt plans collaboratively via ward rounds, professionals' meetings, formulation meetings and CPAs

## **10. Persistent and Severe Absence**

As per the *Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024* strategy:

- Persistent absence is defined as missing 10% or more of sessions.
- Severe absence is classified as missing over 50% of sessions.

The College recognises that students' medical needs may lead to higher absence rates. Strategies focus on recovery while striving to improve attendance above baseline levels where possible.

In 2020-21 5.6% of special school students were persistently absent. The overall absence rate in pupil referral units has dropped to 33.7% in 2020/21, from 35.3% in 2018/19. This is driven by a decrease in unauthorised absence. The rate of persistent absence has remained steady, at 74.5% in 2020/21. The percentage of pupil enrolments who missed more than 50% of possible sessions is 27.8%, again lower than pre-pandemic. Due to the mental health conditions this school is likely to have higher levels of persistent and severe absence than schools that are not based in a CAMHS tier 4 setting.

## **11. Attendance Legal Intervention**

Cloughside College provides education to learners admitted to a Tier 4 CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) setting. These students have acute mental health needs that necessitate a specialised and compassionate approach to education and attendance, significantly diverging from the standard expectations outlined in the Department for Education's *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* document. We have identified the following limitations to the advice we can follow from this document:

- a) Attendance contracts and education supervision orders rely on the assumption that absence stems from wilful non-compliance or parental disengagement. In a Tier 4 CAMHS setting, the primary drivers of non-attendance are acute mental health conditions, including severe anxiety, depression, psychosis, and suicidal ideation. These factors render formal attendance mechanisms inappropriate and potentially harmful, as they risk exacerbating the mental health challenges of both the learner and their family. The immense burden of care already placed on parents makes it unfair and counterproductive to introduce punitive measures.
- a) In terms of setting out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used where absence was not for legitimate reasons. Cloughside acknowledges that for its learners, absence is rarely "not for legitimate reasons." It is closely tied to the psychiatric nature of their placement. Parents of children in Tier 4 settings are already navigating complex healthcare, safeguarding, and educational systems. Introducing the threat of legal intervention risks alienating parents and diminishing trust in the school and wider support network. Furthermore, voluntary support may appear unsuccessful simply due to the severity of a young person's mental health issues, rather than any lack of engagement from the family. **Therefore, it would be unlikely that Cloughside would go down the legal route of penalty notices.**
- b) While joint working between educational and social care services is a critical aspect of safeguarding, Cloughside already operates within a multidisciplinary framework involving psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and other professionals. Attendance concerns are intrinsically linked to clinical decisions about a student's capacity to engage in education. Building unrealistic attendance expectations into children in need or child protection plans risks conflating educational attendance with safeguarding concerns, which could place undue pressure on families already managing a complex web of care responsibilities.
- c) Notices to Improve and penalty notices are designed for circumstances where there is evidence of parental negligence or deliberate non-engagement. This does not apply in a Tier 4 CAMHS context, where absences are predominantly driven by health-related factors beyond the control of parents or carers. Penalising families in such situations would not only be unjust but would also undermine the therapeutic ethos of the school and hospital setting.
- d) Attendance prosecution is not compatible with the realities of Tier 4 education. These learners are under clinical care, and their attendance reflects their mental health stability rather than parental negligence or defiance. Pursuing legal action against families of learners in such vulnerable circumstances risks causing further trauma and could create an adversarial relationship between the school and the family, counteracting efforts to foster recovery and reintegration.

Cloughside College operates in an environment where the primary focus is on supporting recovery and enabling students to re-engage with education at a pace appropriate to their mental health needs. The measures outlined in paragraph 104 of *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* are predicated on assumptions that are not applicable to a Tier 4 CAMHS setting. As such, Cloughside does not implement these measures, ensuring that its approach remains aligned with the best interests of its learners and their families.

Cloughside College acknowledges its statutory duty to inform the Local Authority of cases of persistent absence and to work in partnership where attendance concerns remain unresolved. However, in a Tier 4 CAMHS hospital setting, the use of penalty notices, prosecution, or statutory contracts is not proportionate and risks exacerbating clinical difficulties. Instead, our focus remains on recovery, therapeutic support, and re-engagement with education.

## **12. Admissions and Discharge**

- Students are placed on roll when information is received from the medical team via a college Access form.
- On induction to college a pupil's admissions records are added to SIMS.
- A student is removed from the admission roll when removed from hospital.
- The only reason for any deletion from the admissions register is discharge from hospital.
- Attendance records are maintained in SIMS, including necessary personal and educational details.
- On discharge, educational destinations are recorded, and local authorities are notified for students at risk of becoming missing from education.
- On being discharged from the service the known educational destination of any young person will be recorded on SIMS.
- Where a young person under 16 who is admitted to the hospital does not have a home school and could be a child missing from education the local authority will be informed by the administration team.
- On discharge, the administration team will let the local authority know the date of discharge.

## **13. Obtaining information from home schools**

Identifying previous patterns of attendance behaviour as soon as possible is key to avoiding embedded school non-attendance. A college liaison form will be used to obtain information about the young person. This will include prior attainment data, home contacts, UPN etc. The hospital social worker and home school will identify whether a young person is subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection plan.

## **14.Safeguarding**

Young people have observations from ward staff every 15 minutes. These observations occur both in college and on the ward. College staff visit the ward at 9am to encourage young people to attend College.

Safeguarding of students when not at Cloughside is shared between us and the community school. Where students are identified to attend Cloughside, then Cloughside will lead on safeguarding issues. Where students are meant to be in their home schools or at community appointments outside of timetabled days, then it will be the community schools' responsibility to lead on safeguarding and welfare. Any actions will be communicated between Cloughside and the student's community provision.

## Escalation Procedures When a Child's Safety Cannot Be Confirmed

In rare circumstances where a young person does not attend education at Cloughside College, and the school is unable to make contact with the family, carers, or relevant health professionals to confirm the student's safety and wellbeing, the following escalation procedures will be initiated:

### A. Inpatients (Ward-Based Education)

These students are resident on the hospital ward, either detained or voluntary.

#### Procedures:

1. **Initial Checks (within 30 minutes of missed session):**
  - Education staff will visit the ward to confirm whether the student is on-site and able to attend.
  - If the student is not visible or staff are unsure of their whereabouts, the nurse in charge will be consulted immediately.
  - Where the student's location remains unclear or there is concern about disengagement, the Unit Lead or DSL will liaise with the nurse in charge and/or CAMHS ward team to verify the student's status and risk level.
2. **Safeguarding Escalation:**
  - If the ward team is unable to confirm the student's whereabouts or safety, this will be treated as a safeguarding concern. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will notify the hospital safeguarding team and ensure joint decisions are made on next steps.
3. **Record of Actions:**
  - A written record will be kept of all communications and actions taken, and attendance codes will be updated accordingly with detailed contextual notes.

### B. Day Service (Outpatients)

These students attend the hospital school for up to four days a week but live in the community.

#### Procedures:

1. **Initial Contact (within 30 minutes of missed session):**
  - Day Service staff will be contacted to confirm whether the student had a planned absence or arrived late.
  - If there are no reason for lateness, Day Service/the unit lead/administration team will attempt to contact the student's parent/carer via phone or email.
2. **Follow-Up (within 1–2 hours):**
  - If no contact is made, the Day Service nurse or CAMHS link worker will be asked to complete a welfare check by contacting the family directly.
3. **Safeguarding Escalation:**
  - If no confirmation of the student's safety can be established, the matter will be escalated to the DSL.
  - The DSL will consult the Day Service clinical lead and, if necessary, initiate contact with the local authority safeguarding team or the police if the child is deemed potentially missing.
4. **Parent/Carer Communication:**
  - Once contact is made, the reason for absence will be recorded and attendance logs updated with an appropriate code and explanatory note.

## **C. Section 19 Students (Home or Community-Based Education)**

These students receive education off-site, either at home or in community settings due to medical vulnerability or emotional needs.

### **Procedures:**

- 1. Pre-Visit Confirmation:**
  - The teacher scheduled to deliver the session will confirm the appointment on the day, typically by text or call to the parent/carer.
- 2. No-Show Protocol:**
  - If no one answers the door at the scheduled time and no communication is received:
    - The teacher will try calling the parent/carer and the student (if appropriate).
    - After 15 minutes, the teacher will notify the S19 lead/DDSL or the DSL.
- 3. Immediate Escalation:**
  - If contact cannot be made, the S19/DDSL lead will attempt further communication and, if necessary, contact the local authority (in cases where the student is known to social care) or request a welfare check via the police.
- 4. Community Education Risk Register:**
  - All Section 19 learners will be reviewed weekly to ensure appropriate levels of safeguarding and that escalation procedures are logged and followed up.

## Appendix A: School Attendance Codes September 2024

Present Codes	
/\	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (e.g. holidays, insets and polling station days)