



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Statement

A good education helps to give children the best possible start in life. Most children are normally educated at school and regular attendance is of vital importance. Poor school attendance damages educational achievement and the future progress of young people. Promoting and supporting good attendance at school is essential to learning and attainment.

The aim of this attendance policy is to set out the systems and procedures for ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly, with as few absences as possible. The policy relates to our overall aims as a Trust of supporting pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available at their school.

Attendance

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision, or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home). Children are expected to attend school every morning and afternoon for 190 days per year (380 attendance marks) unless there is a good reason for their absence.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school to explain why their child will not be in attendance that day. Should the parent/carer not do this, school staff will make every effort to contact them to ascertain the safety and wellbeing of the child. For this reason, we request that all parents/carers provide us with four emergency contact details.

Registration

All pupils are registered electronically twice a day - before the start of morning school and immediately after lunch by whichever member of staff is teaching them. A record is kept of all absences. We use the DfE codes to indicate the type of absence. See Appendix 3.

All absences are noted by the School Office and records kept within the school. Unauthorised absences are investigated by the school office and family support workers/parent support advisers.

Absence

If a child is absent, parents/carers should send a letter or phone the school giving the appropriate details. This must include the exact reason for absence when it is related to illness. If it is a planned absence for a specific reason e.g. hospital appointment, this should be given in advance in writing.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised absence (where the school approves the absence)
- Unauthorised absence (where the school is unable to authorise the absence)

Absence will be **authorised** for:

- Sickness (where the school is satisfied that the illness is authentic)
- Medical/dental appointments, if urgent
- Days of religious observance of the religious body to which the parent belongs

In the interests of the child's education, the Trust does not authorise other types of absence, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The decision to authorise a pupil's absence is wholly at the headteacher's discretion based on their assessment and the merits of each request. It is acceptable

to take a pupil's record of attendance into account when making absence-related decisions. The headteacher can determine the length of the absence as well as whether the absence is authorised.

All requests for absence due to exceptional circumstances must be made in writing prior to the event on the Learning for Life Education Trust Form 'Planned Absence During Term Time'. The headteacher of the relevant school will review each request and decide if it meets the criteria. Parents will be informed of the outcome by letter. Where necessary (for example with siblings), schools across the Trust will liaise to decide on authorisation.

- **Holidays are not exceptional circumstances. Permission will not be given for parents to take their children out of school for a holiday during term time. Term times are for education and this is the priority.**
- The school undertakes to comply in all matters relating to attendance with Regulatory Requirements in respect of The Education (Pupil Registration England) Regulations 2006 and the 2013 amendments regarding the removal of the references relating to family holidays.
- Sickness absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the school is not advised of the reason.
- Days out, e.g. for birthdays, will not be authorised.
- Absence, that falls into one of the categories listed above, will be unauthorised if it is taken without prior permission.

Parents who take their children on holiday in term time may be referred to the Education Inclusion Partnership. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a fixed penalty fine to parents. These currently stand at £60 per parent, per child. A family with two parents and two children could incur a fine of £240.

Unsatisfactory attendance

- Less than 96% attendance. This will have a serious effect on progress
- Persistent lateness

Attendance of all children is monitored on a weekly basis and unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality are viewed seriously. Please see appendices 2 and 4 for procedures.

Reporting

The school's attendance figures are reported on a termly basis to Directors and the schools' Local Governance Committees in the Headteacher's report. Particular concerns are then discussed and ways to improve attendance actioned.

Setting Targets

School level targets for attendance are set annually and are shared with Directors. These targets are then reviewed, and an action plan is drawn up to deal with any issues arising.

Promoting Good Attendance

Evidence shows that tackling absence is most effective when a number of different approaches are adopted.

- The schools encourage good attendance by reminding parents regularly of the importance of their child's good attendance. To do this, we use newsletters, assemblies and individual messages. We include the importance of attendance in our induction packs for new parents and in our training for new staff.

- Attendance will be discussed with parents/carers at consultation meetings/Parents' Evenings in regard to the child's academic and social-emotional progress.
- Each school has staff available to support pupils' return to school after an absence. Where a pupil has been absent or late, we positively welcome them into class. We ensure that they have opportunities to catch up on work that they have missed.
- The Trust has an Attendance working party which meets frequently to analyse attendance data, evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used and decide on next steps. This strategic approach supports schools to manage attendance issues more effectively.

Appendix 1

Absence Notification Procedure for Parents/Carers

Obviously, there will be times when a child is unavoidably unable to attend school e.g. owing to sickness. In such cases, parents should telephone the school by 9.30 a.m. on the morning of the first day of absence. The school administrator will make a note of the reason given, inform the class teacher and ensure that the register (Arbor electronic attendance record) is marked with the appropriate code.

Absence Procedure for School Staff

If no phone call is received by 9.30am, the attendance officer/administrator will then text or phone the child's parents/carers to find out why the child is not in school and a record will be kept that this text/phone call has been made. In some cases, where there are ongoing safeguarding concerns, a home visit will be made. If no contact is made with the parent/carers, then the school administrator will contact the other emergency contacts held by the school. If the child's whereabouts are still unknown by the time the afternoon register is taken, the school administrator will inform the headteacher who will make a risk assessment of the case.

If, by 9.30 am on the second day, contact has still not been made, a home visit will be made. When a home visit is made (following a risk assessment), but there is no response to the door knock, a visiting card will be left asking the parent/guardian to contact the school as soon as possible.

If no contact is made, a representative from the school will visit the home address again on the third day. If a school has a particular concern, such as a safeguarding matter, then social care and/or the police may be contacted. In cases of safeguarding concern this will be reported to the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) team and advice followed.

If, by the end of ten school days, the child has not been seen and parents/carers have not made contact either, the school will contact the Educational Inclusion Partnership to alert them that they have a child missing from school.

Appendix 2

Unsatisfactory attendance

- Less than 96% attendance. This will have a serious effect on progress
- Persistent lateness

Attendance of all children is monitored on a weekly basis and unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality are viewed seriously. The school will monitor trends of children with attendance below 95% and notify parents of any concerns or patterns noted. However, when attendance start to fall further, we will follow the following procedures:

Stage 1

When a child's attendance drops below 93% over a 6-week period, a letter will be sent to parents/carers of the child to let them know that attendance is below expected.

Stage 2a

When a child's attendance falls below 90% for the previous six weeks, a letter will be sent to alert parents/carers to the concerns. There will also be a follow-up phone call. Parents will also be invited to attend an Attendance Surgery if necessary and support may be offered from a family worker. An improvement in attendance will be expected within three weeks.

Or

Stage 2b Cases where there are serious causes for concern

When a child's attendance falls below 90% for the previous six weeks and has previously been below 90% and shows little signs of improvement, a letter will be sent to the parents of the child, to alert them to the concern and invite them to a Parenting Contract meeting at the school. A contract will be made with an attendance target and this will be monitored closely. If the parents do not attend the Parent Contract meeting, they will be informed in writing of the target set in their absence. Notes will be kept of all meetings. An Early Help Assessment (EHA) will be discussed.

Step 3

Where school procedures do not bring about sufficient improvement in attendance, a referral will be made to the Education Inclusion Partnership. This may result in a fixed penalty notice, an interview under caution or even a court appearance and a fine.

Unauthorised absence is effectively truancy and will be dealt with very seriously. **Schools have legal powers to use parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices to address poor attendance and behaviour in school.**

Lateness

Children who arrive at school after the register has been taken will be classed as late, using the 'L' code. Such pupils must report to, or be brought to, the school office upon arrival in order that their late attendance can be recorded in the register. Pupils who are persistently late disrupt not only their own education but also that of the other children in the class. If a pupil is persistently late, a letter will be sent to their parents asking for their co-operation. Should this not be forthcoming, a meeting will be arranged with the headteacher. A referral may be made to the EIPT, if there are on-going concerns.

If a child arrives in school after the register closes, they will be classed as late using the code 'U'. This will have an adverse effect on their attendance record as it will class as an absence.

Appendix 3

REGISTRATION

All pupils are registered twice a day by their class teacher - before the start of morning school and immediately after lunch by whichever member of staff is teaching them. A record is kept of all absences.

All absences are noted by the School Office and records kept within the school. Unauthorised absences are investigated by the school office and family workers. The following codes are used to mark reasons for absence:

Present at school

- / \ Present
- L Late (before registers closed)

Present at an Approved Off-site Educational Activity

- B Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)
- D Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)
- J Interview
- P Approved sporting activity
- V Educational visit or trip
- W Work experience

Authorised Absence

- C Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
- E Excluded (no alternative provision made)
- H Family Holiday (agreed)
- I Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)
- M Medical/Dental appointments
- R Religious observance
- S Study leave
- T Traveller absence

Unauthorised Absence from School

- G Family Holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
- N No reason yet provided for absence
- Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)
- U Late (after registers close)

Administrative Codes

- X Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils
- Y Enforced closure
- Z Pupil not on roll

School closed to pupils

Appendix 4

Penalty Notice (PN) Request Checklist

The criteria detailed below are considered as best practice guidance for schools when considering the use of a penalty notice and do not replace existing legislation nor associated evidential burden.

Before completing form

- Has the period for which the PN is requested been recorded as unauthorised?
- Are there any missing marks or coding irregularities?
- Does coding on the register accurately reflect the dates for which the PN is being requested?
- Is the reason for the request indicated on the form e.g. unauthorised holiday or unauthorised absence?
- Have the parents/carers been informed that they could receive a PN.

Criteria for issuing PN

- 5 days or more continuous absence.
- Can be used as a sanction for irregular attendance. A PN may be used in this instance where a pupil accumulates 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a 6-week period.

Documentation to accompany irregular attendance request

- Completed Contact form
- Attendance certificate ensuring all absences are coded as unauthorised e.g. no 'N' codes
- Evidence of actions taken – letters issued, notes of meetings held, Parent Contact Meeting (PCM) chronology, offer of Early Help Assessment (EHA)
- Evidence that the parent/carer has been notified that they may receive a PN (this can be within documentation of school website, in behaviour policy, in newsletters to parents etc.

If Leave of Absence Request Form is completed by parent/carer

- Copy of request for leave of absence received from parent/carer and signed by all relevant parent/carers and any letter pertaining to that request.
- Signed evidence that school have informed parent/carer in writing that absence will be unauthorised and that this could lead to a PN being issued.
- Reasons for not authorising the holiday should be clearly stated to parent/carer.
- Up to date registration certificate showing the period of absence as unauthorised 'G'

If Leave of Absence Request Form has not been completed by parent/carer

- Up to date attendance certificate showing the period of absence as unauthorised 'G' and the date of return.
- Evidence as to why the school believe that the absence was for the purpose of a leave of absence.
- Signed copy of letter to parent from the head teacher stating that the absence will be coded as unauthorised as it is believed to be for the purposes of a leave of absence without exceptional circumstance and that this could lead to a PN being issued.

Completing contact form

- Parents' full name and surname. Please include parents' date of birth where known.
 - If there are two parents, details of both parents should be completed.
 - Address should be checked.
 - A PN will be issued individually to both parent/carers.
- The contact form should only be submitted once the child has returned to school. If the child fails to return, then the school should follow their Missing Child procedures.
- Documentation provided by the school which supports the request for a PN by the Local Authority can be used as evidence should any legal action be taken. All cases where there is non-payment of the PN would be considered for a prosecution under s.444 of the Education Act 1996.
- If the case proceeds to a prosecution school staff may be required to provide a written witness statement and may be required to give evidence in court.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Signed: **Dated:**

Chair, Learning – Provision Committee